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Is Pueblo Ripe for Tomatoes? Hydroponic Greenhouse Industry coming to Pueblo by Thomas Coleman

Trinidad’s Artistic Glassworkers by Nicole Maio

Stepping into the Past: Three Historical Day Trips by Tracy Solimeno

Aliens Among Us by Randi Gonzales

Hidden Treasure in San Luis by Marc Boone

The Spirit of the Monte Vista Crane Festival by Lydia Hunter
Southern Colorado Magazine
Issue 3 – Summer 2004
Publisher: Russell Meyer
Editor: Chas S. Clifton
Web Designer: Lydia Hunter
Photo Editor: Randi Gonzales
Production Designer: Tracy Solimeno
Contributors: Randi Gonzales, Marc Boone, Judith Martin, Tracy Solimeno, Tom Coleman, Nicole Mao, Lydia Hunter

Photography: Randi Gonzales, Tracy Solimeno, Marc Boone, Judith Martin, Lydia Hunter, Patricia Mellon Moore, Nicole Mao, Tom Coleman.

Production: Tracy Solimeno, Rae Ann Romero, Nicole Mao, Tom Coleman, Judith Martin

On the web: chas.colostate-pueblo.edu/magazine/2004/
Mail: Southern Colorado magazine, Department of English and Foreign Languages, Colorado State University-Pueblo, 2200 Bonforte Blvd., Pueblo, Colorado 81001
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Telephone: 719-549-2226

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Although this will be the largest tomato production facility in the region, Village Farms’ produce will not be in competition with local growers. The billions of pounds of tomatoes produced during the extended growing season will be sold to Sam’s Clubs, Wal-Mart Super Stores, and fast food outlets such as Burger King and McDonalds, all of whom require blemish-free tomatoes of consistent size and quality, the hydroponic greenhouses’ forte. As Spaccamonti says, “Village Farms’ desire is to control production quality of the tomatoes from the cradle to the grave.” PEDCO is considering the possibility of erecting a building on its own nearby land to house a marketing and distribution center for the industry, which would generate even more jobs for the area.

With a minimum nine-month growing season for the greenhouses, the enterprise will rival any business in the Southern Colorado region. Spain, the top greenhouse tomato producer, produces 22-26 lbs./square meter of hydroponically grown tomatoes, compared to an average U.S. outdoor production of less than 8-9 lbs./square meter in Florida.

Mr. Spaccamonti also mentioned the spin-off effect of such an industry: “Very few industries have such great spin-off potential. The local businesses will see immediate increases in revenues from the packaging, machining, transportation, concrete, chemical, and educational needs of the hydroponic greenhouse industry. Revenues from the labor force will greatly add to Pueblo’s tax and revenue income.”

When Albert Vanzeyst first stopped to stretch his legs and saw the slice of the Great American Desert along Interstate 25, he saw gray dirt. After ground-breaking ceremonies, scheduled sometime in 2004, for the massive enterprise, he, Gill Van Der Drift, and Pueblo will be seeing the red and the green of ripe tomatoes and money.

Tomatoes also contain high levels of vitamin C, iron, phosphorus, vitamins A and B, and potassium. One tomato contains as much fiber as one slice of whole wheat bread, with only 35 calories.

The old-wives’ tale of tomato juice neutralizing skunk stink is actually true. Tomato juice contains a chemical that neutralizes butyl mercaptan the skunk’s prime stink ingredient.

Green tomatoes are great when cooked or pickled, but should not be eaten raw. They, like green potatoes, contain solanine, a toxin to humans in large amounts. The leaves also contain toxins.

In 1984 (1984?) tomato seeds went to outer space. More than 12.5 million “Rutgers California Supreme” tomato seeds orbited the earth for 6 years in a satellite as a NASA and SSE experiment. The crew of the Columbia Space Shuttle retrieved the seeds, which were distributed to more than 3 million school children and 64,000 teachers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and 34 foreign countries.

Though the space seeds germinated and initially grew slightly faster and had elevated levels of chlorophyll and caroten es than non-space traveled seeds, the effects were temporary.

One participant wrote, “Dear NASA, my name is Matt, I am in grade 2. I really enjoy growing my plants. Here are my results. My earth seed did not grow. My space seed grew but it fell off my desk. It died.”

Southern Colorado Magazine

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Stuffed Meatballs over Rice

Sauce
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 cloves fresh garlic, minced
2 green peppers, chopped
1 medium yellow squash, chopped
1 medium zucchini, chopped
1 large eggplant, peeled and cubed
6 Roma tomatoes, peeled and chopped
4 tablespoons fresh parsley, finely chopped
2 tablespoons fresh rosemary, finely chopped
1 tablespoon fresh thyme, removed from stem
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup chicken broth
1/8 cup onion, finely chopped
2 eggs, beaten
1/3 cup parmesan cheese
3/4 cup bread crumbs

Meatballs
2 pounds lean ground turkey, beef, or pork
3/4 cup bread crumbs
1/3 cup parmesan cheese
1/8 cup onion, finely chopped
2 eggs, beaten
1 teaspoon garlic salt
1 teaspoon pepper
1 cup olive oil
1 teaspoon cinnamon, mixed
2 tablespoons sugar

Stuffing
2 tablespoon butter
1/2 cup water
1 cup broccoli, chopped into bite-size pieces
1 cup cauliflower, chopped into bite-size pieces
1 cup zucchini, chopped into bite-size pieces
1 cup yellow squash, chopped into bite-size pieces
1/8 cup fresh dried red pepper

1. Heat butter and water in large skillet over medium heat. Add garlic and green peppers sauté for 2 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add squash, zucchini, eggplant, and tomatoes; sauté for 5 more minutes. Then add parsley, rosemary, thyme, salt, ground black pepper, red pepper, and chicken stock. Reduce heat and simmer for 35-40 minutes.

2. In large mixing bowl combine all the meatball ingredients. Use your hands to thoroughly mix ingredients. Divide mixture into 24-30 portions, place a small amount of stuffing in the core of each and roll into balls.

3. Heat olive oil in large skillet. Fry meatballs for 7-10 minutes or until brown and thoroughly cooked. Serve meatballs over a bed of rice and top with prepared sauce.

Steamed Beets
4 medium beets, peeled and sliced.
1/2 pound asparagus
1. Steam beets and asparagus for 20-25 minutes or until tender. Serve either warm or chilled.

Fresh Fruit and Fried Pastry
2 cups cantaloupe
2 cup honeydew melon
2 cups red seedless grapes
12 sheets prepared phyllo dough

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Lightly grease 6 oven-safe dessert bowls. Place two filo sheets in each bowl, allowing any extra to fall over the lip of the bowl. Sprinkle with cinnamon sugar mixture and bake for 5-7 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool, fill, and serve.

Is Pueblo Ripe for Tomatoes?

By Thomas Coleman

In the distance, a dust devil danced between cacti. Nearer the idling automobile, a lizard sat silently, deathlike, waiting for an unlucky ant to creep from the dry anthill. Clumps of crisp prairie grasses whispered in the moistureless air.

“This is exactly what I am looking for,” Albert Vanzeyst said as he stared across the barren slice of the Great American Desert next to Interstate 25. The real estate agent, who had been trying to interest Vanzeyst in mountain property all day, looked at him and shook his head.

The agent’s confusion was understandable. Vanzeyst had said that he wanted to look at land for hydroponic greenhouses. He was interested in buying land for growing tomatoes. The agent had chauffeured Vanzeyst along the western Arkansas River basin all day looking at prime mountain and river drainage acreage. As the mystified real estate agent looked out over the semi-arid landscape just south of Pueblo, the dry, parched dirt seemed like the last place to grow anything, much less tomatoes. Realizing he was out of his element, he gave Vanzeyst the phone number for the Pueblo Economic Development Corporation (PEDCO). Albert Vanzeyst contacted Jim Spaccamonti, president of PEDCO, and a new business venture was born.

Vanzeyst and Gill Van Der Drift, two partners in the global hydroponic greenhouse industry, had been looking for the perfect place to expand. Vanzeyst’s company, Village Farms, had been growing hydroponic, Facts and Myths about the “Wolf-peach”

In the 3rd century, Galen, a biologist and medical doctor, described a “wolf-peach, a poison in a palatable package, used to destroy wolves.”

The French botanist Tournefort labeled the tomato Lycopersicon Esculentum, meaning wolfpeach. He mistakenly equated it to the description by Galen, partly because the tomato belongs to the nightshade family, as do the mandrake and deadly nightshade (belladonna), which are poisonous.

The tomato is native to South and Central America, making it a true American plant.

Peruvian Incas cultivated the tomato as early as 700 AD, trading them to the Aztecs of Central America and Mexico.
free tomatoes and specialty bell peppers in Texas, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Mexico. He and Van Der Drift, president of Mountain High Greenhouse Construction, needed new acreage to expand their industry.

Farming has long been one of the largest and most consistent industries of the Pueblo region. Many families have lived and worked the farms east of Pueblo for generations. Coupled with steel-making, farming formed the backbone of the region’s economy. Along the Arkansas River corridor, farming has been successful because of the availability of water, good soil conditions, and the Southern Colorado climate. With an average growing season temperature of 70 degrees, an average of 77 percent of every year filled with sunshine, 308 days of fair skies, the area is almost perfect for agriculture. Unfortunately, this creates a challenge for a large, new farming endeavor, as most of the arable land is already in use for crops.

However, the beauty of greenhouse farming is that land otherwise unfit for farming can be used for hydroponics. Since the plants are not grown in the raw earth, poor soil conditions do not affect their quality. Tomatoes and bell peppers, the produce Vanzeyst and Van Der Drift are mainly interested in, can be grown in peat, vermiculite, or a combination of both, which can be added to polystyrene beads or perlite. Other media such as coconut shreds, sand, sawdust, and even rock wool are common as well.

As Van Vanzeyst talked representatives, they were more excited about creating a series of One of the main businessesmen was whether the area they chose would be compatible for the Dutch farmers that normally form the nucleus of the farms’ management. In Holland, urban sprawl is rapidly eating up all the farmland, the majority of which is used for greenhouse-style farming. Many farming families are being forced out of production by the skyrocketing prices offered by land developers. “In Holland, it is estimated in the next 10 years, 5,000 acres of greenhouses have to disappear,” Vanzeyst says. Many of these farmers and their families are willing to move to another part of the world to continue their livelihood if the area is a good place to raise their children and make their homes. Pueblo, in both the investors’ opinion, is just such a place.

As the two investors, along with a core group of 12 others, began investigating possible land sites in the region, the beauty of the Pueblo area became increasingly apparent. The large amount of sun, the quality of life, the proximity to major cities, the I-25 transportation corridor, the availability of a ready workforce, institutions that train people in the areas needed for the high-tech, computer-intensive industry, and available, inexpensive land all attracted the group. Although the investors had researched areas in other states, Vanzeyst says, “It’s probably no surprise to the people that Pueblo won, hands down.”

“In 1519, Cortez discovered tomatoes growing in Montezuma’s gardens and brought seeds back to Europe, where they were considered ornamental but poisonous.

“In 1597, Gerard’s Herbal lists toma- toes as ‘Apples of Love,’ or ‘pommes d’amour’ and names both red and yellow varieties, along with the comment “In Spain & those hot regions they use to eat the Apples prepared & boiled with pepper, salt, and oyle: but they yield very little nourishment to the body, and the same naught & corrupt. Likewise, they doe eate the Apples with olie, vinegar & pepper mixed together for sauce to their meate, even as we in these cold countries doe mustard.”

“In 1874, the Landreh Seed Company became the 1st seed company to sell tomato seeds. Landreh once extended George Washington 30 days’ credit on his unpaid bill.

“Thomas Jefferson mentioned planting seeds in 1809, 20 years before they were considered ‘widely cultivated.’

“Robert Gibson Johnson is credited with dispelling the fears of the tomato as the poisonous ‘wolfpeach’ in 1820. The story goes that he wowed down an entire bushel of tomatoes on the Salem, New Jersey, courthouse steps. The story was such common knowledge that in 1994 CBS dramatized it in their “You Are There” series, only to learn later that same year that it was only a fable. We were there, but Johnson wasn’t.”

Fried Summer Squash

4 medium yellow squash
1/2 cup flour

In 1 maple syrup
2 tablespoons butter
1/2 cup brown sugar
1 teaspoon cinnamon

1/4 teaspoon salt
2 cups breadcrumbs
2 teaspoons garlic salt
2 teaspoons palemary

1 In large steamer, steam pears for 10-15 minutes or until pears can easily be pulled off, and pear is tender. Set aside until cool.

2 In small saucepan heat butter over medium heat. Stir in brown sugar, cinnamon, and salt. Cook, stirring constantly until brown sugar is completely dissolved. Add burgundy and simmer for 3-5 minutes.

4 Gently cut down one side of each pear and remove pit and stalk. Place on small serving dishes and pour glaze over the top, letting it pool slightly at the base of the pear. Serve immediately.

~MEDITERRANEAN~

Mixed Greens with Feta Dressing

Salad
6 medium Bartlett pears
2 tablespoons butter
1/4 cup brown sugar
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 cups breadcrumbs

3 Heat olive oil in large, heavy skillet over medium heat. Add breaded squash in a single layer and fry until golden brown, turning with a fork as needed. Serve immediately.

Pear with Burgundy Glaze

6 medium Bartlett pears
2 teaspoons butter
1/4 cup brown sugar
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 cups breadcrumbs

1 In small bowl mix all of the dressing ingredients. Beat mixture
Herbed Potatoes

- Pour into a medium bowl, add the mixture, stirring until the dough forms a ball.
- Lightly grease 3 x 1 inch tart pan or muffin pan. Divide the dough into 12 equal pieces, roll each into a ball and press evenly over the bottom and sides of each cup, making sure the middle is pressed down slightly to form a reservoir. Bake dough for 15 to 17 minutes, or until pastry is a pale golden brown. Set on wire rack to cool.

Apple-Mint Tart

- 1/4 cup water

Heat the oven to 425 degrees. In a 9 x 9 easelore spread cubed potatoes evenly along the bottom of the pan. Sprinkle basil, parsley, rosemary, oregano, and garlic salt over the top. Cut butter into 1/4 teaspoon wedges and place randomly on potatoes. Add 1/4 water. Cover in foil and bake for 20-25 minutes or until tender.

Apple-Mint Tart

**Dough**
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup butter
- 2 tablespoons cream or milk
- 1 egg yolk

**Filling**
- 3 pounds baking apples, halved, cored, and cut into 1/2 inch wedges
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons apple jelly, melted
- 1/4 cup butter
- 1/2 tablespoons minced extract

1. Heat oven to 375 degrees. In a medium bowl combine flour, sugar, and salt, stir. Cut in butter until mixture forms small crumbs. In a separate bowl beat cream and egg yolks with a fork then add to crumb mixture, stirring until the dough forms a ball.
2. Lightly grease 3 x 1 inch tart pan or muffin pan. Divide the dough into 12 equal pieces, roll each into a ball and press evenly over the bottom and sides of each cup, making sure the middle is pressed down slightly to form a reservoir. Bake dough for 15 to 17 minutes, or until pastry is a pale golden brown. Set on wire rack to cool.
3. In medium bowl combine apple wedges, sugar, lemon juice, jelly butter and mint. Stir until apples are evenly coated. Pour mixture in to medium baking dish and bake for 12 to 15 minutes, stirring once. Apples should be fork tender. Cool to room temperature.
4. Spoon cooled topping over tart shells, and serve.

**Spinach and Carrot Stuffed Manicotti**

**Sauce**
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 12 Roma tomatoes, quartered.
- 2 tablespoons fresh oregano, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons fresh basil, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/2 cup mozzarella cheese
- 1/4 cup asiago cheese
- 24 ounces ricotta cheese
- 1 bunch fresh spinach
- 2 tablespoons fresh basil, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons fresh oregano, finely chopped
- 2 teaspoons baking soda

**Herb Dip**
- 1 cup olive oil
- 2 tablespoons oregano, dried
- 2 tablespoons basil, dried
- 1 tablespoon tarragon, dried
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup mozzarella cheese
- 1 teaspoon salt

**Pasta and Filling**
- 12 Manicotti shells
- 1 bunch fresh spinach
- 2 medium carrots, peeled.
- 24 ounces ricotta cheese
- 1/4 cup asiago cheese
- 1/2 cup mozzarella cheese
- 1 teaspoon salt

1. Divide the dough into 12 equal pieces, roll each into a ball and press evenly over the bottom and sides of each cup, making sure the middle is pressed down slightly to form a reservoir. Bake dough for 15 to 17 minutes, or until pastry is a pale golden brown. Set on wire rack to cool.

**Herbed Potatoes**

- 6 pounds red potatoes, cubed
- 2 teaspoons basil, dried
- 2 teaspoons parsley, dried
- 1 1/2 teaspoons rosemary, dried
- 1 1/2 teaspoons oregano, dried
- 1 1/4 teaspoons garlic salt
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1/4 cup water

Heat the oven to 425 degrees. In a 9 x 9 easelore spread cubed potatoes evenly along the bottom of the pan. Sprinkle basil, parsley, rosemary, oregano, and garlic salt over the top. Cut butter into 1/4 teaspoon wedges and place randomly on potatoes. Add 1/4 water. Cover in foil and bake for 20-25 minutes or until tender.

**Apple-Mint Tart**

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**Spinach and Carrot Stuffed Manicotti**

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- 1/2 cup water
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- 1 1/4 teaspoons garlic salt
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1/4 cup water

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**Apple-Mint Tart**

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- 1/2 teaspoon salt
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4. Spoon cooled topping over tart shells, and serve.
Carrot Soup

1 pound carrots, peeled and sliced
5 cups chicken broth
1 1/2 cup heavy cream
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon sugar
1/8 teaspoon pepper
1/4 teaspoon parsley, dried

1. In medium saucepan combine carrots and broth, bring to a boil over medium heat. Cover and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes or until carrots are tender, adding water if liquid is absorbed too quickly. Carrots need to be very tender, easily cut with spoon with little to no pressure.

2. Puree mixture in a blender or food processor, until smooth. Then pour back into saucepan. Over medium heat, slowly stir in cream, sugar, salt, pepper, and parsley. Reheat, without boiling. Serve immediately.

Chicken Marsala with Peppers

2 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 cup thinly sliced mushrooms
1 cup sweet red pepper, sliced
1 cup onion, sliced
6 Boneless, chicken breasts
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 1/2 teaspoons minced garlic
2 teaspoons oregano
2 teaspoons finely sliced basil leaves
2 teaspoons finely sliced thyme
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1/2 cup Marsala wine
1/2 cup chicken stock

1. Heat olive oil in large skillet over medium heat, add mushrooms, sweet red peppers, green bell peppers, and onion, sauté for 2 minutes. Add chicken breasts and cook until chicken is golden brown and peppers are tender, turning every 2 to 3 minutes.

2. In medium, heavy saucepan heat 1 tablespoon olive oil; add garlic, oregano, basil, and thyme, stirring 4 or 5 times. Add fresh lemon juice and marsala wine. In separate bowl beat cornstarch and chicken stock, then add to marsala sauce. Salt and pepper to taste.

3. Pour sauce over chicken and peppers. Serve immediately.
of work options opens the window to conversation and togetherness. As the growing season wears on, members will be surprised to realize that fun is not far behind. Just like most other memorable moments, the laughter comes because of the work rather than inspire of it. There truly is pride in a job well done, especially when it involves good friends and great food.

Work shares are limited though, so if the experience is what you are after, you will want to contact the farm as soon as possible. The remaining share options do not require any time investment; however, I would suggest at least one day of touring the farm and visiting with the other members. It makes for a lovely outing and lets you put a face with your food.

At the close of the fall, all share members are invited to the annual Harvest Potluck. It is a time to celebrate the accomplishments of the season. Mingling and chatting, the CSA members, who have now grown to know each other as friends, spend the time eating, dancing, and enjoying live bluegrass entertainment.

All in all, the experience of teikei farming is delightful and highly rewarding. It is nice to have a face on your food; to know where your food is coming from, and how it was grown. In fact, I would have to say that the only pitfall would be overcoming your fear of the unknown vegetable. However, the benefits of new friends, laughter, time with family, and good food make it worth the short drive and extra showers.

Contact Info:
Country Roots Farm
29342 Everett Road
Pueblo, CO 81006
Phone: 719-948-2206
E-mail: organicminds@earthlink.net
http://www.rocket.com/CRF/programprices.htm

CSA Prices
Regular Share Plans range from $295-$600 and usually feed from 2 to 4 people, with the largest share allowing 7 extra bushels throughout the season.

Work Share Options offer discounts from $100 to $295 and require 1 to 3 hours a week of work on the farm.

Experience & Community
While healthy produce and variety can be found in local farmers’ markets, the true beauty of community farming would be missed. The Morrises left their profession to have time with their family and are equally committed to allowing you time with yours. Share members can choose the work share or full work share option in which they spend an hour to three a week on the farm, allowing them a discounted price. Often, the time is spent next to your children, spouse, and siblings. It allows for time away from the stress of deadlines, homework, and household chaos. The fresh air, chattering animal life, and variety ranging from colossal to scalloped, golden to green.

If variety in vegetables to you is a pitfall rather than a blessing I would suspect that it is because you are wondering, “What am I supposed to do with this?” (replace “this” with the vegetable of choice—or me it was either turnips or Swiss chard). You can also seek the advice of Ryan or Betsy, who are more than understanding when it comes to these types of questions. Their weekly newsletters, that spotlight and include recipes for a different vegetable each week, are also good sources. You can also seek comfort in the other shareholders, the other new members are feeling the same way and the veterans have an wealth of advice.

Sunlight stretches through the windows of Art For Living, a small downtown art shop in Trinidad, Colorado. Cascading through glass panels swirled with pink and pale blue, the rays illuminate the orange, green, and deep red of a piece of stained glass and gleam on the surface of glass beads, before slowly tapering off into the studio in the back of the store. But darkness does not take over from here. Instead, a 5,000-degree torch flame burns brightly as Trinidad City Planner Sean Holme, who is also a skilled glass blower, positions a tube of glass in his hand. Slowly, he rolls it back and forth through the flame until it resembles the glowing cherry of a cigarette.

A native of Washington, Holme used glass blowing to get himself through college and then moved to Trinidad after getting the job of City Planner. He is currently teaching Allyn Bacon, owner of Art For Living, the skill of glass blowing. Trinidad, built on coal mining, may be evolving into an artists’ colony, evident by the small galleries, museums, and different artisans popping up in the area.
Glass Blowing

Glass blowing is an art that is as ancient as glass itself, and according to Holme, the tools used in the craft have not been altered much since the time of the Egyptian glass blowers. A torch, raw glass tubes, punts, and reamers are the basic tools used in the art.

The hollow tube is not ready to be blown until it has been heated to a temperature high enough to make it soft and flexible so that it can be shaped by the blower's breath. This is accomplished by passing the tube back and forth through a 5000-degree flame of a torch.

After the flame heats the end of the tube, the blower can roll it over a graphite panel called a marvering platter. This tool shrinks the end of the tube, the tool called upon is the reamer, also made of graphite.

Once the tube reaches the desired width, the blower can use a punt tool to twist off the excess glass. This tool resembles cotton candy being spooled, seals the end of the tube, and it is once again passed through the flame until the glass is smooth and even.

From here, color can be added to the tube by heating small, thin strips of colored glass hot enough to make them melt ever so slightly. The blower can then dab the glass “paint brushes” onto the tube, transferring small spots of color to the piece.

Next, Bacon places a thin strip of adhesive copper around the delicate edge of the glass piece. After he positions another piece of glass along the copper, he uses a soldering iron to heat the copper and fuse the glass together. The process is repeated until the final work is completed.

Another method used in stained glass replaces the copper strips with lead. This “Lead Came” method is employed in the creation of heavier pieces, such as doors, that would fall apart if held together with copper.

Holme and Bacon remain optimistic about the artistic future of Trinidad, enjoying the creative flavor that is emerging in the little town. But is this emergence just a passing trend?

“Definitely not,” Holme said.

Stained Glass

A very popular and well-known type of glass art is stained glass, composed of bits of pieces of different tints of glass that form together to create a window, a door, or a wall hanging that can turn sunlight into a kaleidoscope of color. Bacon has two methods that he employs when creating a stained glass piece.

The first and most popular among glass hobbyists is known as the Copper Foil Method. Copper foil is used for smaller pieces, such as a wall hanging. The Copper Foil Method begins with a single sheet of glass that is cut into various designs using glass cutters. Once the glass shapes are cut and separated, Bacon smooths the edges using either sicle stones or a more modern device that flattens jagged glass very quickly: a power grinder.

The process is continued until all the desired pieces are separated from one another. After the pieces are finished, Bacon places a thin strip of adhesive copper around the edge of each piece. Then the pieces are placed in the desired positions on a glass marvering platter. This tool seals the end of the tube.

This is accomplished by passing the tube back and forth through a 5000-degree flame of a torch.

After the flame heats the end of the tube, the blower can roll it over a graphite panel called a marvering platter. This tool shrinks the end of the tube, the tool called upon is the reamer, also made of graphite.

Once the tube reaches the desired width, the blower can use a punt tool to twist off the excess glass. This tool resembles cotton candy being spooled, seals the end of the tube, and it is once again passed through the flame until the glass is smooth and even.

From here, color can be added to the tube by heating small, thin strips of colored glass hot enough to make them melt ever so slightly. The blower can then dab the glass “paint brushes” onto the tube, transferring small spots of color to the piece.

Now the tube can be blown into any design the artist desires.
Southern Colorado offers multiple opportunities to appreciate the best of the past. While the options are many, Southern Colorado magazine has collected three day trips to take you away from today and into the past: one in Cañon City, one in Pueblo, and one in Trinidad.

Trip 1: Cañon City—“Contemporary flavor in historic surroundings”

Listed on the National Historical Register as the largest historic commercial district in Colorado, Cañon City’s downtown area lets the visitor imagine its nineteenth-century life. For your first stop, visit the Municipal Building on the corner of Sixth and Royal Gorge Blvd. It is home to the municipal museum and will give you a good historical picture of the area.

Stop two, Colorado Territorial Prison Museum at 210 N. 1st St. “Territorial” is one of the oldest prisons in the United States and the first in Colorado, and its museum holds countless stories concerning some of the youngest prisoners in history, riots, and Territorial’s notorious cannibal inmate.

A downtown walking tour is available at the local Chamber of Commerce, 403 Royal Gorge Blvd., and includes historical information pertinent to each building registered. Throughout the day, classes are offered in sculpture, painting, knitting, and pottery at many of the local merchants. For dining, I recommend the Owl Cigar Store (don’t let the name fool you – it’s an old-fashioned malt and hamburger shop) located at 626 Main St. or The Rustic Table at 325 Main St. While on your tour, make sure to cut up one block to see the First Presbyterian Church on the corner of Macon and Seventh St. By evening you can either wind down or wake up to live bands at Manhattan’s Bar and Grill at 331 Main St. or a local production by the Fremont Civic Theater.

Community Pride and Experience:
Local Growers Offering More Than Just Healthy Produce

Just past dawn, as the sun rises slowly into the fresh morning sky and the last of the auburn haze fades, two figures walk from the nineteenth-century farm house. I am accompanied by a man dressed in jeans, who steps easily over the dust and occasional sprouting obstacle. One would never suspect this congenial, chatty man to have made his start in the enclosed spaces of the medical profession.

Ryan Morris and his wife, Betsy, left the sterile white walls for open space and dirt-covered roads. After several years of long hours and little time at home, the couple decided that a change was in order. Family became their priority, and so with hard work and strong community ethics they established Country Roots Farm in 1993.

Country Roots Farm is part of the Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) movement, which began in the United States just over 25 years ago. The idea, however, originated in Japan. The idea of teikei, or “putting the farmers’ face on food” was developed by Japanese women concerned with the influx of imported food. They created a network in which growers and the community worked together to support local agriculture. Its goal was to bring farmers and consumers together. Teikei spread into Europe and then to America where it became known as CSA. It provides the benefits of freshness and variety in produce, experience, and community togetherness.

Members help pay for the operation cost by purchasing shares, thus allowing the farmer to pay for seeds, fertilizer,
By 1952, this man who started his business at 19 took sixth place in the selling of tractors in a four-state area. In 1954, the Denver & Rio Grande Western railroad employed a number of residents. The town consisted of the train depot, post office, two grocery stores and two garages, cafes and filling stations within one mile of the town, a modern cottage court, a grade school and high school. There was a strip mine for lime north of Cotopaxi, owned and mined by Colorado Fuel & Iron. The mine was intended to prepare food for stock and also for fertilizer.

Presently, there is a small grocery store with a filling station—I call it the Cotopaxi Mall—a post office, a somewhat larger school providing education to all the surrounding towns and villages with an eight-man football team and their own meager football field, and a small antique shop. Where Dall McCrory's garage once stood, directly across the street west of the Cotopaxi store, now stands Cotopaxi's first apartment complex. The town of Cotopaxi is now much smaller than before and has few employees. Don't count on getting a job there anytime soon, except maybe in the school system, always in need of good teachers, or with river raft companies in the summer season.

However, the mountain scenery is beautiful and breathtaking—truly God's country. Hunting and fishing draw sportsmen from near and far, and there is lodging and camping with fairly good facilities a mile or two, directly east of Cotopaxi—the Arkansas River KOA & Loma Linda Motel right on the river between April and October.

Glenn Mullin never married and leaves no children. He has returned to work he enjoyed at an earlier age, working at the new school as a teacher's aide. He lives a very simple life. His favorite chair is placed next to the stove that has always heated this historic site, as he frequently reads into the night. The old safe holds nothing now but personal paperwork—no gold, but maybe only the documentation that followed him through the golden era of his life. He's a very humble man and really doesn't give himself credit for what he's contributed to Cotopaxi, which is more than he thinks. He's been a responsible, stable link in the history of Cotopaxi, which serves sandwiches and other light lunch options.

From here take Grand Avenue to the downtown Union Avenue Historic District near B St. Here you will find shopping, dining, and a chance to view the Union train depot, complete with various train cars from throughout history. For a little relaxation and conversation, I recommend La Renaissance, 217 E. Routt Ave, originally a church built in 1886, which specializes in gourmet dining.

Finally, take Union south until it meets West Abriendo Avenue, turn right on Abriendo, and then left onto Jackson Street, go three blocks, and take a right on Pitkin Avenue. On the left side of the street you will find the Pitkin Place Historical District. This street as well as the surrounding area, built between 1874 and 1924, combines the Romanesque, Queen Anne, and other classical architectural styles. While the homes are not open for touring, the drive makes for a short, refreshing end to the day.

Trip 2: Pueblo – “High Living in the 1800s”

Pueblo is our next historical hot spot. The Pueblo County Courthouse, 215 W. 10th St., is a good place to start. The Classical-style building lets visitors wander through circular corridors lined with both murals and framed artwork. Just across the street is The First Presbyterian Church, which was completed in 1890. Its bell tower rises nearly 140 feet.

The next stop is the Rosemont Museum and Carriage House, 419 W. 14th St. Originally owned by banker John Thatcher, it was constructed in 1893 of pink granite, which was quarried about 75 miles away. It has 37 rooms decorated with the original furnishings and adornments, making it a wonderful home in which to slip away from the modern office. On the same property, the carriage house has been converted into restaurant, which serves sandwiches and other light lunch options.

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Historic Train Depot

stands. Cora’s oldest child, Mattie, married Donald Augustine, initial owner of the Cotopaxi Store, and the Modern Cottage Court motel, just east of the store made of brick and stone—still standing.

The local school operated irregularly from the 1870s on. By 1883 school operated for six months out of the year. What kid today would not jump for joy with school in session for only six months out of the year? Mullin himself taught school for a period of time at the older school where the cafeteria now stands.

In 1854, there was still no church yet in Cotopaxi. Occasional church services were held at the school. These started out with periodic, unscheduled ministry; eventually circuit-riding ministers maintained services once a month. In between, faithful people would conduct Sunday School services in the school building. Most people put a value on church, and there was no internal strife about separation of church and state.

Until 1879, the only transportation to and from Cotopaxi was stagecoach and oxen freighters, and until 1900 a stagecoach drawn by horses was maintained between Silver Cliff and Cotopaxi, carrying passengers and mail back and forth. A new era opened up for Cotopaxi when the railroad built the route from Texas Creek, seven miles east of Cotopaxi, to Salida, 23 miles west. However, freighters drawn by horses were still the major means of getting their supplies. There was a huge train depot not far from Glenn Mullin’s house that has since been dismantled; he participated in the destruction of the historic building much to his sorrow. Now there is no train service past Parkdale (20 miles east of Cotopaxi) on the line, which goes from Pueblo over Tennessee Pass to Minturn.

In 1915, Fred Jones, who was a blacksmith and sometimes worked on cars and sold gas and tires, built the first Cotopaxi garage. In 1919 Dall McCrory, 19, converted an abandoned creamery building into an automobile garage; his business boomed as automobiles became more popular, and he expanded to a dealership of Model T Fords, selling seven the very first day. Then he stocked electrical appliances, and he expanded even more, selling tractors, farm machinery, and hay balers.

Trip 3: Trinidad—“In its own time”

Trinidad is a fantastically preserved town, complete with architecture, leisure, and culture. Among its several museums, I have chosen the Baca House and Bloom Mansion as stop one. Both are located on Main Street, in the downtown area. The Baca House is a museum covering the history of both Trinidad and of the Santa Fe Trail. Next to this structure is the beautiful Bloom Mansion, which was constructed in 1882 for Frank Bloom, a local cattle baron and banker.

Next, take a stroll down Main Street, through galleries, antique shops, restaurants, and stores. The artwork, especially, claims its own timeline and personality. Springing from a mixture of pioneer artistry and recent artist immigration, the pieces range from Old West to modern versions of your grandmother’s antiques. Make sure to enjoy the local dining as well—try Black Jack’s Saloon and Steakhouse or Rino’s Italian Restaurant. Both are rich with atmosphere and good food.

Due to the distance and amenities the area offers, the final stop for today is a suggestion to stay the evening. Trinidad is home to some of the most delightful historical stays in the state, such as the Stone Mansion Bed and Breakfast or Trabino Inn. Both provide romantic, historically furnished rooms and a full breakfast.

(Downtown Trinidad)

(Above: Bloom Mansion, Left: Rosemount Museum)
“Gold Dust Tom” or simply “Gold Tom” was what most people called George Henry Thomas, a moderately successful prospector who had traveled and prospected in South America as well as Colorado. In 1867, Gold Tom traveled from the Central City gold camp, crossed the Great Divide, and began prospecting along the Arkansas River, eventually working his way downstream to the site of Cotopaxi.

There, as he viewed a peak seen to the west through the narrow canyon, its conical shape reminded him of the Cotopaxi volcano in Ecuador, whose name in the Quechua language means “the shining pile.”

According to historian Flora Jane Satt, Gold Tom also worked for the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad as it was laying track up the river. His duties included seeking timber for ties. Exploring the area, he chose a spot in what is now called Gold Tom Park northeast of Cotopaxi, where he built a cabin and filed several mining claims, including the Cotopaxi Lode in 1873, one of the richest deposits of silver in Fremont County.

According to long-time resident Glenn Mullin, Gold Tom’s nickname came from the gold dust and nuggets that he panned from the Arkansas River. Of course, every old prospector leaves behind stories of buried treasure: Gold Tom’s treasure is allegedly buried somewhere in Gold Tom Park, but it has never been found. Mullin doesn’t seem to think that it still exists.

In 1880 there seemed to be some bad blood between Gold Tom and another settler named Myers—a dispute over a dog. Two men kept harassing Gold Tom and siccing their dog on him, and Gold Tom ultimately ended up shooting the dog. Soon afterwards, he and Myers confronted each other in front of the Banta Store. Gold Tom did not take particularly good aim and then Myers shot back, killing him.

Although Gold Tom found a rich lode, he lacked funds to develop it, and ended up selling the mine to Emmanuel Saltiel, the businessman who imported his own labor force.
Changing Cotopaxi
The history of a small town
By Judith Martin

Cotopaxi, now a very small town in the Arkansas River canyon between Cañon City and Salida, boasts its peak years in the early to mid-twentieth century.

Recently I explored some Cotopaxi stories with lifelong resident Glen Mullin, who lives in the former store and post office that he inherited from his mother, Orlee Hendricks Mullin, born in Cotopaxi in 1892 and the former postmistress.

Wandering through what was once the store in the left front and the post office in the right front and the family living quarters in the rear of the store, I felt as though I was drifting back in time. The huge steel safe still stands in what once was the post office, standing next to the large wood-burning stove.

Cotopaxi was named by a prospector named Gold Dust Tom (see sidebar), Mullin told me, and he sold his best mining claim in 1875 to a man named George Saltiel. During that era of immigration from Eastern Europe, Saltiel had convinced the leaders of a Jewish group that he could help their countrymen from Russia and Poland start new lives farming in the American West. The immigrants stepped off the train in Cotopaxi and bought the store and post office that he inherited from his mother, his mines for less than the going wage. They were paid not in cash but in credit at his store, which he figured ulterior motive being to obligate them to working in his mines for less than the going wage. They were paid left them little opportunity to go elsewhere. They did manage to get jobs with the railroad, building track when the railroad ventured west. After many died from the harsh winter, they migrated north to Denver in the West Colfax Avenue district and formed the nucleus of the Orthodox Community where some of their descendants can still be found.

In 1883, Mr. and Mrs. O.B. Carroll arrived in Cotopaxi and bought the store and hotel, next to Glenn's parents store. Mr. and Mrs. Carroll had no children, but they raised a little girl, Ruby Keen, 5, whose mother died shortly after her birth, and her father and an older sister died enroute to the Cotopaxi area. Flora Jane Satt, who presented her master's thesis, "The Cotopaxi Colony," to the Department of History at the University of Colorado, stated that Ruby Keen, married to Charley McCoy, was the oldest living pioneer in Cotopaxi in 1954. Glenn has favorable memories of Ruby McCoy and a healthy respect for her. McCoy, a cattle rancher, owned a store and saloon directly south of Glenn's parents' store, which bottomed out in the twenties with the days of prohibition. There is an old Indian burial ground on stock. The houses had no wells, barns, supplies, or stock. After her first crops were planted in August and September and doomed to fail because of early frosts, the men had no choice but to work for Saltiel—his ultimatum being to obligate them to working in his mines for less than the going wage. They were paid not in cash but in credit at his store, which he figured left them little opportunity to go elsewhere. They did manage to get jobs with the railroad, building track when the railroad ventured west. After many died from the harsh winter, they migrated north to Denver in the West Colfax Avenue district and formed the nucleus of the Orthodox Community where some of their descendants can still be found.

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“I’d always heard the UFO stories, but I was skeptical. I mean, I have a hard time with the little green men theory,” Messoline said. She always joked about building a UFO Watchtower, but it wasn’t until her cattle business failed that she seriously thought about building the tower. “Originally, it was supposed to be a tourist trap thing…put cute little aliens on the road, tourists come in, buy from the gift shop.”

Judy Messoline’s tower opened in May 2000, and people flocked to the tower, even in 20-below weather. Thousands have visited from all over the world and hundreds of abductees have come to tell their stories. Twenty-one sightings have been recorded, and of these, Judy has seen 15 herself. So is she a believer?

“I totally believe that there has to be life someplace else in this massive universe,” Messoline replies. With all of the talk of sightings, I am disappointed at the lack of photos on display in the gift shop. One would expect that any place worthy of being called a UFO Hot Spot would boast a number of clear, unambiguous photos of the phenomena. I tell my inner skeptic to keep quiet as I move from the gift shop to what seems like a yard full of hubcaps and rocks.

In speaking with Messoline, I learn that the area is far more than just a hunk of junk. Since February, 2002 there have been 16 psychics who have visited the tower, and each has confirmed the presence of “vortextes,” or portals to parallel universes. “Two psychics marked the centers for me and suggested that a garden be built so visitors could rest, relax, and meditate in it,” Messoline said. The result is a rock garden filled with hubcaps, remains of old satellite dishes, and industrial debris splashed with green paint.

The tower itself gleams as I approach the stairs. At the entrance a smiling alien replica holds a donation basket. Messoline had originally planned to charge admission to the tower, but the idea was never successful. I deposit my two dollars and climb the stairs. I have to admit, the atmosphere is strangely calming. The sky is clear and the heavenly bodies shine. After 20-minutes, my attempt to see any strange lights in the sky is a failure.

While the idea of flying saucers is to me still nothing more than the raw material of a good episode of The X-Files, thousands still flock to the watchtower every year, especially certain patterns unique to each pair. Lone cranes are often seen circling flocks calling out for familiar voices. This was the Mattingly’s second day at the festival, and they assured us that more birds would arrive around 4:30 in the evening. First the birds came in pairs, or groups of four, then several small groups, then in flocks. Soaring in formation, the sunset light gilding their plumage gold, the cranes swooped into the field.

It was like standing at the bottom of the ocean. The sandhill cranes passing over our heads could have been gliding through water, they were so agile. In perfect unison they banked left revealing their white bellies, then right showing their dusky brown tops. With legs extended behind them and long necks stretched, their flight posture is unique from other large birds. The cautious birds circle three or four times, then lower their spindly legs. They beat their wings several times to slow themselves, then land with a single hop. Their landings are made more elegant by their awkward appearance. Something with that big of a body atop legs as skinny as theirs has no right to be so graceful.

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In 1975 a fostering program for whooping cranes was begun at Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Idaho. The program replaced sandhill crane eggs with those of the more endangered whooping cranes in the Rocky Mountain Flock in the hopes of boosting the whoopers’ population. Their numbers peaked in 1984-85 at 34 individuals; however, no whooping cranes currently migrate with the Rocky Mountain Flock.

This cross-fostering program lasted 15 years before being discontinued. In 1990 it was determined by the U.S. Whooping Crane Recovery Team that precious egg resources were being wasted in the cross-fostering program, as the whooping cranes became improperly sexually imprinted. The whooping cranes were imprinted on the foster sandhill cranes, and were not mating.

It is also believed that the low availability of suitable mates, and the wide distribution of the whoopers contributed to the lack of breeding.

An unusually high mortality rate hampered efforts to establish a whooping crane flock. A majority of the 24 adult birds lost during the program were killed in collisions with man-made structures (such as power lines and fences). Disease and predators killed others. A severe drought at Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge also contributed to the fragility of the birds’ situation.

Many attempts were made to see the cross-fostered cranes succeed, even after it was decided that no new eggs should be added to the flock. In mid 1989, a three-pronged approach was suggested. Cross-fostered birds were monitored to determine whether they could reproduce naturally, studies on markers to reduce bird collisions with power lines were initiated, and captive-produced whoopers were released into the flock.

Although none of the cross-fostered whoopers mated with one another, attempts to mate them with foster reared birds met with limited success. And in 1992 a sandhill-whooper hybrid was observed in the San Luis Valley.

Several whoopers continued with the Rocky Mountain Flock until, in 1995, their numbers dwindled to four birds that migrated with the flock for several years. In 2002 the last whooping crane in the flock disappeared, and is presumed dead. Efforts to boost whooper populations are now concentrated on the wild flock that winters near the Gulf of Mexico. Currently, no whooping cranes migrate with the Rocky Mountain sandhills.
A short drive south on Highway 15, and we found ourselves at the Monte Vista National Wildlife Reserve. A one-way dirt track looping the reserve was marked as the driving tour. It looked promising. The landscape was flat and marshy with interlocking pools of water surrounded by yellowish reeds. We saw ducklings, geese, cattails, and hippies walking their dogs, but not a single crane. We left the reserve for one of the lookouts marked on our spring crane-viewing map.

An employee of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was informing two Mennonite men, who had arrived on bicycle, that whooping cranes no longer got close. As we headed back into town, I gazed out of the window thinking, “Was that all?” But then I spotted a car pulled off on a little dirt side road. The cranes in this field were a lot closer. So, in our second tire screeching U-turn of the day, we joined the young family enjoying the much closer view of the magnificent birds.

Several other carloads of people came and went as the afternoon dwindled. An elderly couple, Don and Mildred Mattingly from Pueblo, kept exclaiming to everyone about the crane’s trilling call. “Once you hear that sound, you’ll never forget it,” Don said.

And it is quite a sound. They have a piercing, twittering call, high pitched and haunting. The cranes’ call is not only impressive, it is functional as well, and plays an integral part in their social construction. Cranes mate for life and it is widely believed that they recognize the calls of their mates and other family members. During take-off and landing, they keep a steady right angle to the ground. If only we could see it.

The Rocky Mountain Flock, and I expected their absence. I peered through a telescope at the group of sandhills that were congregating out in the fields along the highway. The greater sandhill cranes, which make up a majority of the flock that passes through Colorado’s San Luis Valley every year, can reach up to four feet in height and weigh up to 13 pounds; their wingspan is nearly six feet. Lesser sandhills, whose population is generally concentrated in Nebraska’s Platte Valley, are smaller and lighter. Greater and lesser sandhills are a “brown and ash colour’d crane” as George Edwards, the first to identify them, said in 1750. The Rocky Mountain flock of greater sandhills is consistently 20,000 strong, the largest single flock population, and is often bolstered by several thousand lesser sandhills joining the migration. Without the aid of the telescope, all I was able to see were bird-shaped blobs. It’s rather difficult to get close to the birds because they scare easily.

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However, unlike their overdeveloped and heavily visited neighbors to the south–Taos and Santa Fe, New Mexico–San Luis remains a quiet and undisturbed town. Take away a few utility poles and you can imagine life here in the early 20th century.

In fact, “village renewal” is returning the San Luis skyline to its original look by replacing the poles and lines with buried cable. Lantern posts are also being installed along the newly renovated sidewalks.

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rode with Buffalo Bill at one time.

“People in those days didn’t speak English much, but at school all the nuns spoke English,” Espinoza added that 95 percent of the children went to Catholic school then.

Her family has been here since the mid 1800s, and she can remember that her grandfather was a U.S. Postmaster and had a store, but he could only understand and speak a little English. However, he could read the names on the letters and packages well enough to get the mail out.

Espinoza thinks that there are some families here with five living generations and that most of the people in San Luis have lived there all of their lives.

“Life is better now than it was when I was a young girl in the 1920s,” said Espinoza. “There was some tourist trade then, but it’s a better business now.” But overall, she thinks life hasn’t changed much since 1937.

Huberto Maestas, 44, is a San Luis native and a bronze sculptor. His work is figurative and many of his subjects are biblical. He has earned an international reputation with works in the Vatican collection in Rome. He has a gallery and studio with his wife, documentary filmmaker Dana Maestas.

He met Pope John Paul II on two occasions, first in 1991 with the presentation of a set of replica miniatures of the Shrine of the Stations of the Cross, and again in 1995 when he made a gift of an adoration cross, which had been commissioned by the Pueblo Catholic Diocese.

One of two Catholic shrines in Colorado, Maestas’ Shrine of the Stations of the Cross is located on a hilltop on the north end of San Luis known as the Mesa de La Piedad y de la Misericordia (Hill of Piety and Mercy). It is a series of graphic meditations on the last hours of Christ’s life—his judgment, suffering and death. A 15th station—the resurrection—is included.

Anyone who has an appreciation for art, culture, or religion should see this. Arguably, one of the most important works of sculpture in the world, Maestas’ bronze depictions of Christ’s last journey is a marvel to behold.

Passing the fifteen stations along the way, a three-quarter-mile path up the hill leads to La Capilla de Todos los Santos, the Grotto of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and the Spiritual Labyrinth of Prayer. All of these are bronze sculptures were done by Maestas.

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Among the best reasons to visit San Luis is for the pleasure of a meal at Emma’s Hacienda Restaurant. As much as the town’s art and architecture, this place is a modern day landmark and is, arguably, the best Mexican restaurant between Denver and Santa Fe.

Upon entering Emma’s, you will see cast-iron wood stoves, kettles, and irons, reminding you of days gone by when life here was much simpler—and yet, maybe much harder. But happiness in those days was measured in how successful one was at mere survival—a good crop, a good stock sale, or just simply making it through the winter and often -40 degree weather.

“I’ve been here since the first part of 1937,” said Emma Espinoza, 87. “My kitchen was tiny then. I cooked on those wood stoves here and at home for ten years.”

One of the stoves was a wedding present from a primo (cousin) of her husband’s, a man who reportedly rode with Buffalo Bill at one time.

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In person. But the whoopers had a difficult history with the Rocky Mountain Flock, and I expected their absence.

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Several other carsloads of people came and went as during the annual UFO Watch held in August (see sidebar.)

Messoline thinks these gatherings are very important: “People who have had these experiences need to be able to get together and talk about it without anyone laughing at them. I didn’t realize how serious the UFO business was. Can you believe it? It all got started...from a giggle.”

The UFO Watchtower is on Colorado Highway 17, 2.5 miles north of Hooper. Hours are 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.—although it stays open later if there’s activity in the sky. Donations are welcomed and appreciated. For more information about the tower, log on to www.ufowatchtower.com.
“I’d always heard the UFO stories, but I was skeptical. I mean, I have a hard time with the little green men theory,” Messoline said. She always joked about building a UFO Watchtower, but it wasn’t until her cattle business failed that she seriously thought about building the tower. “Originally it was supposed to be a tourist trap thing... put cute little aliens on the road, tourists come in, buy from the gift shop.”

Judy Messoline’s tower opened in May 2000, and people flocked to the tower, even in 20-below weather. Thousands have visited from all over the world and hundreds of abductees have come to tell their stories. Twenty-one sightings have been recorded, and of these, Judy has seen 15 herself. So is she a believer?

“I totally believe that there has to be life somewhere else in this massive universe,” Messoline replies. With all of the talk of sightings, I am disappointed at the lack of photos on display in the gift shop. One would expect that any place worthy of being called a UFO Hot Spot would boast a number of clear, unambiguous photos of the phenomena. I tell my inner skeptic to keep quiet as I move from the gift shop to what seems like a yard full of hubcaps and rocks.

In speaking with Messoline, I learn that the area is far more than just a hunk of junk. Since February, 2002 there have been 15 psychics who have visited the tower, and each has confirmed the presence of “vortices” or portals to parallel universes. Two psychics marked the centers for me and suggested that a garden be built so visitors could rest, relax, and meditate in it,” Messoline said. The result is a rock garden filled with hubcaps, remains of old satellite dishes, and industrial debris splattered with green paint. The tower itself gleams as I approach the stairs. At the entrance a smiling alien replica holds a donation basket. Messoline had originally planned to charge admission to the tower, but the idea was never successful. I deposit my two dollars in the basket. Messoline had originally planned to charge admission to the tower, but the idea was never successful. I deposit my two dollars in the basket.

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The UFO Watchtower consists of a 10-foot platform built around the dome-shaped adobe gift shop. (all photos by Randi Gonzalez)

The atmosphere is strangely calming. The sky is clear and the heavenly bodies shine. After 20-minutes, my attempt to see any strange lights in the sky is a failure. While the idea of flying saucers is to me still nothing more than the raw material of a good episode of The X-Files, thousands still flock to the watchtower every year, especially certain patterns unique to each pair. Lone cranes are often seen circling flocks calling out for familiar voices. This was the Mattingly’s second day at the festival, and they assured us that more birds would arrive around 4:30 in the evening. First the birds came in pairs, or groups of four, then several small groups, then in flocks. Soaring in formation, the sunset light gilding their plumes gold, the cranes swooped into the field.

It was like standing at the bottom of the ocean. The sandhill cranes passing over our heads could have been gliding through water, they were so agile. In perfect unison they banded left revealing their white bellies, then right showing their dusty brown tops. With legs extended behind them and long necks stretched, their flight posture is unique from other large birds. The cautious birds circle three or four times, then lower their spindly legs. They beat their wings several times to slow themselves, then land with a single hop. Their landings are made more elegant by their awkward legs. And in 1992 a sandhill-whooper hybrid was observed in the San Luis Valley.

Although none of the cross-fostered whoopers mated with one another, attempts to mate them with foster reared birds met with limited success. And in 1992 a sandhill-whooper hybrid was observed in the San Luis Valley.

Several whoopers continued with the Rocky Mountain Flock until, in 1995, their numbers dwindled to four birds that migrated with the flock for several years. In 2002 the last whooping crane in the flock disappeared, and is presumed dead. Efforts to boost whooper populations are now concentrated on the wild flock that winters near the Gulf of Mexico. Currently, no whooping cranes migrate with the Rocky Mountain sandhills.

In 1975 a fostering program for whooping cranes was begun at Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Idaho. The program replaced sandhill crane eggs with those of the more endangered whooping cranes in the Rocky Mountain Flock in the hopes of boosting the whoopers’ population. Their numbers peaked in 1984-85 at 34 individuals; however, no whooping cranes currently migrate with the Rocky Mountain Flock.

This cross-fostering program lasted 15 years before being discontinued. In 1990 it was determined by the U.S. Whooping Crane Recovery Team that precious egg resources were being wasted in the cross-fostering program, as the whooping cranes became improperly sexually imprinted. The whooping cranes were imprinted on the foster sandhill cranes, and were not mating.

It is also believed that the low availability of suitable mates, and the wide distribution of the whoopers contributed to the lack of breeding.

An unusually high mortality rate hampered efforts to establish a whooping crane flock. A majority of the 24 adult birds lost during the program were killed in collisions with man-made structures (such as power lines and fences). Disease and predators killed others. A severe drought at Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge also contributed to the fragility of the birds’ situation.

Many attempts were made to see the cross-fostered cranes succeed, even after it was decided that no new eggs should be added to the flock. In mid 1989, a three-pronged approach was suggested. Cross-fostered birds were monitored to determine whether they could reproduce naturally, studies on markers to reduce bird collisions with power lines were initiated, and captive-produced whoopers were released into the flock.

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Changing Cotopaxi
The history of a small town

By Judith Martin

Cotopaxi, now a very small town in the Arkansas River canyon between Cañon City and Salida, boasts its peak years in the early to mid-twentieth century.

Recently I explored some Cotopaxi stories with lifelong resident Glen Mullin, who lives in the former store and post office that he inherited from his mother, Orlee Hendricks Mullin, born in Cotopaxi in 1892 and the former postmistress.

Wandering through what was once the store in the left front and the post office in the right front and the family living quarters in the rear of the store, I felt as though I was drifting back in time. The huge steel safe still stands in what once was the post office, standing next to the large wood-burning stove.

Cotopaxi was named by a prospector named Gold Dust Tom (see sidebar), Mullin told me, and he sold his best mining claim in 1875 to a man named George Saltiel. During that era of immigration from Eastern Europe, Saltiel had convinced the leaders of a Jewish group that he could help his countrymen to find farmland for an agricultural settlement, but Cotopaxi is capable of ranching but never agriculture.

After a bumpy wagon trip over dry streambeds, the Jewish immigrants were introduced to their new homes, buildings of houses, supplies and stock. The houses had no wells, barns, supplies, or stock. After their first crops were planted in August and September and doomed to fail because of early frosts, the men had no choice but to work for Saltiel—his ulterior motive being to obligate them to working in his mines for less than the going wage. They were paid not in cash but in credit at his store, which he figured left them little opportunity to go elsewhere. They did manage to get jobs with the railroad, building track when the railroad ventured west. After many died from the harsh winter, they migrated north to Denver in the West Colfax Avenue district and formed the nucleus of the Orthodox Community where some of their descendants can still be found.

In 1883, Mr. and Mrs. O.B. Carroll arrived in Cotopaxi and bought the store and hotel, next to Glenn's parents store. Mr. and Mrs. Carroll had no children, but they raised a little girl, Ruby Keen, 5, whose mother died shortly after her birth, and her father and an older sister died enroute to the Cotopaxi area. Flora Jane Satt, who presented her master's thesis, “The Cotopaxi Colony,” to the Department of History at the University of Colorado, stated that Ruby Keen, married to Charley McCoy, was the oldest living pioneer in Cotopaxi in 1954. Glenn has favorable memories of Ruby McCoy and a healthy respect for her. McCoy, a cattle rancher, owned a store and saloon directly south of Glenn's parents' store, which bottomed out in the twenties with the days of prohibition. There is an old Indian burial ground on the roadway reads “Hooper 17 mi.” Although, I have lived in Southern Colorado all of my life, I don't think I have ever heard of the town, home to Judy Messoline and the UFO Watchtower. Then again, I am in the mystical San Luis Valley, where anything is possible.

I travel down the long, narrow Highway 17. The view in this bustling agricultural region includes the snow-capped San Juan Mountains, winter-barren farmland in the foreground, and an occasional grazing cow. Yet, there is something strangely eerie about this drive. It is quiet—too quiet.

As I approach the town, home to Judy Messoline, I don't think I have ever heard of the small Loaf’n’ Jug. To my right, a green sign on the roadway reads “Hooper 17 mi.” Although, I have lived in Southern Colorado all of my life, I don't think I have ever heard of the town, home to Judy Messoline and the UFO Watchtower. Then again, I am in the mystical San Luis Valley, where anything is possible. I slow down to look in some of the windows and find my way to the UFO Computer Network Web site ranks Saguache County as No. 1 nationwide in reports of unearthly sightings per capital—131 sightings this year alone. Truth or not, thousands claim they are out there.

By Randi Gonzales

About a quarter of a mile into the town of Alamosa, I pull into the parking lot of a small Loaf’n’ Jug. To my left, a green sign on the roadway reads “Hooper 17 mi.” Although, I have lived in Southern Colorado all of my life, I don't think I have ever heard of the town, home to Judy Messoline and the UFO Watchtower. Then again, I am in the mystical San Luis Valley, where anything is possible. I travel down the long, narrow Highway 17. The view in this bustling agricultural region includes the snow-capped San Juan Mountains, winter-barren farmland in the foreground, and an occasional grazing cow. Yet, there is something strangely eerie about this drive. It is quiet—too quiet.

Known as the “Mysterious Valley,” this 50-mile-wide, 125-mile-long valley is home to many tales of paranormal activity. Indian legends claim that the area is a window into other worlds and there have been hundreds of unexplained “sightings.” The UFO Computer Network Web site ranks Saguache County as No. 1 nationwide in reports of unearthly sightings per capital—131 sightings this year alone. Truth or not, thousands claim they are out there.

My fear subsides as a handmade smiling alien cutout points “This Way to the UFO Watchtower.” Past the gate, little green-painted alien figurines dot the entrance path. After driving through the labyrinthine entrance, I see a domed adobe gift shop, which sits partly under the 10-foot tower. The gift shop contains anything alien—from “alien dust” to key chains. Not surprisingly, the degree of paranormality seems to be greatly exaggerated. In the distance, is the home of the owner, Judy Messoline. Judy Messoline never expected to get into the UFO business. She moved to Hooper in 1995 to fulfill her lifelong dream of telling her UFO stories and she would just giggle.

By Judith Martin

ALIENS AMONG US

“I’d always heard the UFO stories, but I was skeptical. I mean, I have a hard time with the little green men theory.”

- Judy Messoline
“Gold Dust Tom” or simply “Gold Tom” was what most people called George Henry Thomas, a moderately successful prospector who had traveled and prospected in South America as well as Colorado. In 1867, Gold Tom traveled from the Central City gold camp, crossed the Great Divide, and began prospecting along the Arkansas River, eventually working his way downstream to the site of Cotopaxi.

There, as he viewed a peak seen to the west through the narrow canyon, its conical shape reminded him of the Cotopaxi volcano in Ecuador, whose name in the Quechua language means “the shining pile.”

According to historian Flora Jane Satt, Gold Tom also worked for the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad as it was laying track up the river. His duties included seeking timber for ties. Exploring the area, he chose a spot in what is now called Gold Tom Park northeast of Cotopaxi, where he built a cabin and filed several mining claims, including the Cotopaxi Lode in 1873, one of the richest deposits of silver in Fremont County.

According to long-time resident Glenn Mullin, Gold Tom’s nickname came from the gold dust and nuggets that he panned from the Arkansas River. Of course, every old prospector leaves behind stories of buried treasure: Gold Tom’s treasure is allegedly buried somewhere in Gold Tom Park, but it has never been found. Mullin doesn’t seem to think that it still exists.

In 1880 there seemed to be some bad blood between Gold Tom and another settler named Myers—a dispute over a dog. Two men kept harassing Gold Tom and siccing their dog on him, and Gold Tom ultimately ended up shooting the dog. Soon afterwards, he and Myers confronted each other in front of the Banta Store. Gold Tom did not take particularly good aim and then Myers shot back, killing him.

Although Gold Tom found a rich lode, he lacked funds to develop it, and ended up selling the mine to Emmanuel Saltiel, the businessman who imported his own labor force.

Judith Martin

Mullin recalls stories of Otis Witcher’s father, T. Witcher who arrived in Cotopaxi in 1867 from Cave Springs, Georgia, traveling with an oxen freighter as far as Pueblo. At that point, he walked to his brother’s ranch at the mouth of Phantom Canyon near Canon City and lived with his brother until 1872. T. Witcher introduced ranching to Cotopaxi area, making a trip to Texas for a trail herd of 5,000 cattle, then a second trip for 3,000 cattle, and his last trip in 1879 for 4,000 cattle that he ranged in the upper northern country of Cotopaxi all the way to the outskirts of Salida.

An additional pioneer of Cotopaxi was Mrs. Cora McCrory, whose father William Stout forged his way from Madisonville, Texas with his parents in a covered wagon drawn by oxen in the 1800s. Cora related stories of Ute Indians in the area and their travels crossing the river just above her father’s home and camping on a hill just above their home. Her mother delighted the Indians with potatoes and white bread and continually maintained a friendly relationship with them. The big ranch house in the lower part and east of Howard up on the hill still
Historic Train Depot

stands. Cora’s oldest child, Mattie, married Donald Augustine, initial owner of the Cotopaxi Store, and the Modern Cottage Court motel, just east of the store made of brick and stone—still standing.

The local school operated irregularly from the 1870s on. By 1883 school operated for six months out of the year. What kid today would not jump for joy with school in session for only six months out of the year? Mullin himself taught school for a period of time at the older school where the cafeteria now stands.

In 1954, there was still no church yet in Cotopaxi. Occasional church services were held at the school. These started out with periodical, unscheduled ministry; eventually circuit-riding ministers maintained services once a month. In between, faithful people would conduct Sunday School services in the school building. Most people put a value on church, and there was no internal strife about separation of church and state.

Until 1879, the only transportation to and from Cotopaxi was stagecoach and oxen freighters, and until 1900 a stagecoach drawn by horses was maintained between Silver Cliff and Cotopaxi, carrying passengers and mail back and forth. A new era opened up for Cotopaxi when the railroad built the route from Texas Creek, seven miles east of Cotopaxi, to Salida, 23 miles west. However, freighters drawn by horses were still the major means of getting their supplies. There was a huge train depot not far from Glenn Mullin’s house that has since been dismantled; he participated in the destruction of the historic building much to his sorrow.

Now there is no train service past Parkdale (20 miles east of Cotopaxi) on the line, which goes from Pueblo over Tennessee Pass to Minturn.

In 1915, Fred Jones, who was a blacksmith and sometimes worked on cars and sold gas and tires, built the first Cotopaxi garage. In 1919 Dall McCrory, who converted an abandoned creamery building into an automobile garage; his business boomed as automobiles became more popular, and he expanded to a dealership of Model T Fords, selling seven the very first day. Then he stocked electrical appliances, and he expanded even more, selling tractors, farm machinery, and hay balers.

Trip 3: Trinidad—"In its own time"

Trinidad is a fantastically preserved town, complete with architecture, leisure, and culture. Among its several museums, I have chosen the Baca House and Bloom Mansion as stop one. Both are located on Main Street in the downtown area. The Baca House is a museum covering the history of both Trinidad and of the Santa Fe Trail. Next to this structure is the beautiful Bloom Mansion, which was constructed in 1882 for Frank Bloom, a local cattle baron and banker.

Next, take a stroll down Main Street, through galleries, antique shops, restaurants, and stores. The artwork, especially, claims its own timeline and personality. Springing from a mixture of pioneer artistry and recent artist immigration, the pieces range from Old West to modern versions of your grandmother’s antiques. Make sure to enjoy the local dining as well—try Black Jack’s Saloon and Steakhouse or Rino’s Italian Restaurant. Both are rich with atmosphere and good food.

Due to the distance and amenities the area offers, the final stop for today is a suggestion to stay the evening. Trinidad is home to some of the most delightful historical stays in the state, such as the Stone Mansion Bed and Breakfast or Trabino Inn. Both provide romantic, historically furnished rooms and a full breakfast.

(Downtown Trinidad)

(Above: Bloom Mansion, Left: Rosemount Museum)
Trip 2: Pueblo – “High Living in the 1800s”

Pueblo is our next historical hot spot. The Pueblo County Courthouse, 215 W. 10th St., is a good place to start. The Classical-style building lets visitors wander through circular corridors lined with both murals and framed artwork. Just across the street is The First Presbyterian Church, which was completed in 1890. Its bell tower rises nearly 140 feet.

Finally, take Union south until it meets West Abriendo Avenue, turn right on Abriendo, and then left onto Jackson Street, go three blocks, and take a right on Pitkin Avenue. On the left side of the street you will find the Pitkin Place Historical District. This street as well as the surrounding area, built between 1874 and 1924, combines the Romanesque, Queen Anne, and other classical architectural styles. While the homes are not open for touring, the drive makes for a short, refreshing end to the day.

By 1952, this man who started his business at 19 took sixth place in the selling of tractors in a four-state area. In 1954, the Denver & Rio Grande Western railroad employed a number of residents. The town consisted of the train depot, post office, two grocery stores and two garages, cafes and filling stations within one mile of the town, a modern cottage court, a grade school and high school. There was a strip mine for lime north of Cotopaxi, owned and mined by Colorado Fuel & Iron. The lime was intended to prepare food for stock and also for fertilizer.

Presently, there is a small grocery store with a filling station—I call it the Cotopaxi Mall—a post office, a somewhat larger school providing education to all the surrounding towns and villages with an eight-man football team and their own meager football field, and a small antique shop. Where Dall McCrory's garage once stood, directly across the street west of the Cotopaxi store, now stands Cotopaxi's first apartment complex. The town of Cotopaxi is now much smaller than before and has few employees. Don't count on getting a job there anytime soon, except maybe in the school system, always in need of good teachers, or with river raft companies in the summer season.

However, the mountain scenery is beautiful and breathtaking—truly God's country. Hunting and fishing draw sportsmen from near and far, and there is lodging and camping with fairly good facilities a mile or two, directly east of the Cotopaxi town, a modern cottage court, a grade school and two garages, cafes and filling stations within one mile of the train depot, post office, two grocery stores and screaming.

The Lime was intended to prepare food for stock and also for fertilizer. Cotopaxi, owned and mined by Colorado Fuel & Iron, has the best climate in winter and summer, and October.

Glenn Mullin never married and leaves no children. He has returned to work he enjoyed at an earlier age, working at the new school as a teacher's aide. He lives a very simple life. His favorite chair is placed next to the stove that has always heated this historic site, as he frequently reads into the night. The old safe holds nothing now but personal paperwork—no gold, but maybe only the documentation that followed him through the golden era of his life. He’s a very humble man and really doesn't give himself credit for what he's contributed to Cotopaxi, which is more than he thinks. He's been a responsible, stable link in the history of Cotopaxi and once more he does his share, as one of Cotopaxi's lifelong residents, to keep its history alive.

Contact: Arkansas River KOA & Loma Linda Motel directly about lodging at Box 387, Cotopaxi, Colorado 81223, 800-562-2686 or fax 719-275-2249.

Year-round activities include nearby state parks, geological sites, museums, historic districts, designated scenic /historic byway, hot mineral springs, and golf course, all within 30 minutes, and a small restaurant within two miles, a ghost town within 60 minutes. Summer activities include fishing, whitewater rafting, horseback riding, wagon/hay rides, 4WD trails, hiking, and backpacking. Cotopaxi has the best climate in winter and summer, and, of course, peace and contentment. Never before have I ever felt closer to God than when I lived on our mountain top property with no running water or utilities, just the quiet of God's creation!
Southern Colorado offers multiple opportunities to appreciate the best of the past. While the options are many, Southern Colorado magazine has collected three day trips to take you away from today and into the past: one in Cañon City, one in Pueblo, and one in Trinidad.

Trip 1: Cañon City—“Contemporary flavor in historic surroundings”

Listed on the National Historical Register as the largest historic commercial district in Colorado, Cañon City’s downtown area lets the visitor imagine its nineteenth-century life. For your first stop, visit the Municipal Building on the corner of Sixth and Royal Gorge Blvd. It is home to the municipal museum and will give you a good historical picture of the area.

Stop two, Colorado Territorial Prison Museum at 210 N. 1st St. “Territorial” is one of the oldest prisons in the United States and the first in Colorado, and its museum holds countless stories concerning some of the youngest prisoners in history, riots, and Territorial’s notorious cannibal inmate.

A downtown walking tour is available at the local Chamber of Commerce, 403 Royal Gorge Blvd., and includes historical information pertinent to each building registered. Throughout the day, classes are offered in sculpture, painting, knitting, and pottery at many of the local merchants. For dining, I recommend the Owl Cigar Store (don’t let the name fool you – it’s an old-fashioned malt and hamburger shop) located at 626 Main St. or The Rustic Table at 325 Main St. While on your tour, make sure to cut up one block to see the First Presbyterian Church on the corner of Macon and Seventh St. By evening you can either wind down or wake up to live bands at Manhattan’s Bar and Grill at 331 Main St. or a local production by the Fremont Civic Theater.

Community Pride and Experience: Local Growers Offering More Than Just Healthy Produce

by Tracy Solimeno

Just past dawn, as the sun rises slowly into the fresh morning sky and the last of the auburn haze fades, two figures walk from the nineteenth-century farm house. I am accompanied by a man dressed in jeans, who steps easily over the dust and occasional sprouting obstacle. One would never suspect this congenial, chatty man to have made his start in the enclosed spaces of the medical profession.

Ryan Morris and his wife, Betsy, left the sterile white walls for open space and dirt-covered roads. After several years of long hours and little time at home, the couple decided that a change was in order. Family became their priority, and so with hard work and strong community ethics they established Country Roots Farm in 1993.

Country Roots Farm is part of the Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) movement, which began in the United States just over 25 years ago. The idea, however, originated in Japan. The idea of teikei, or “putting the farmers’ face on food” was developed by Japanese women concerned with the influx of imported food. They created a network in which growers and the community worked together to support local agriculture. Its goal was to bring farmers and consumers together. Teikei spread into Europe and then to America where it became known as CSA. It provides the benefits of freshness and variety in produce, experience, and community togetherness.

Members help pay for the operation cost by purchasing shares, thus allowing the farmer to pay for seeds, fertilizer,
Glass Blowing

Glass blowing is an art that is as ancient as glass itself, and according to Holme, the tools used in the craft have not been altered much since the time of the Egyptian glass blowers. A torch, raw glass tubes, puntys, and reamers are the basic tools used in the art.

The hollow tube is not ready to be blown until it has been heated to a temperature high enough to make it soft and flexible so that it can be shaped by the blower’s breath. This is accomplished by passing the tube back and forth through a 5000-degree flame of a torch.

After the flame heats the end of the tube, the blower can roll it over a graphite panel called a marvering platter. This tool shrinks the end of the tube. If the tube needs to be widened on the end, the tool called upon is the reamer, also made of graphite.

Once the tube reaches the desired width, the blower can use a punty tool to twist off the excess glass. This tip, which resembles cotton candy being spooled, seals the end of the tube, and it is then again passed through the flame until the glass is smooth and even.

From here, color can be added to the tube by heating small, thin strips of colored glass hot enough to make them melt ever so slightly. The blower can then dab the glass “paint brush” onto the tube, transferring small spots of color to the piece.

Now the tube can be blown into any design the artist desires.

Stained Glass

A very popular and well-known type of glass art is stained glass, composed of bits of pieces of different tints of glass that form together to create a window, a door, or a wall hanging that can turn sunlight into a kaleidoscope of color. Bacon has two methods that he employs when creating a stained glass piece.

The first and most popular among glass hobbyists is known as the Copper Foil Method. Copper foil is used for smaller pieces, such as a wall hanging. The Copper Foil Method begins with a single sheet of glass that is cut into various designs using glass cutters. Once the glass shapes are cut and separated, Bacon smooths the edges using either sickle stones or a more modern device that flattens jagged glass very quickly: a power grinder.

Next, Bacon places a thin strip of adhesive copper around the delicate edge of the glass piece. After he positions another piece of glass along the copper, he uses a soldering iron to heat the copper and fuse the glass together. The process is repeated until the final work is completed.

Another method used in stained glass replaces the copper strips with lead. This “Lead Came” method is employed in the creation of heavier pieces, such as doors, that would fall apart if held together with copper.

Holme and Bacon remain optimistic about the artistic future of Trinidad, enjoying the creative flavor that is emerging in the little town. But is this emergence just a passing trend?

“Definitely not,” Holme said.

Health and Variety

Fresh produce begins by being healthy. In the CSA program, routine pesticide use, as well as any genetic modification of seed or crop is prohibited. Organic or certified naturally grown vegetables are harvested from natural seed and fertilizer. Farmers like the Morrises use cover crops rather than pesticides for weed control, reducing the risk of allergies and other health problems associated with pesticide use, including reproductive problems, cancer, and certain mental disorders.

Organic food production also bans the use of artificial food additives, the use of which has been linked to heart disease, osteoporosis, and hyperactivity.

Most supermarket vegetables, by comparison, are grown on the farm may at first appear typical, the Morrises go to great length to surprise members with some rare delights, often growing three to seven varieties of each vegetable. The rotation of crops and three harvests also help to give members a variety of produce.

Their tomatoes range from beautiful currant-colored minis to baseball-size black-tinged, and even some that look more like a lemon. Ryan’s favorite fruit is melon, so expect to see and taste some wonderful and unusual varieties. Last year, they even grew a miniature pocket melon that was originally used in Europe as an aromatic. It is not much on flavor but delightful, in its perfume-like quality. Eight other varieties were grown for the taste buds, and flavor choices. If you are a typical city dweller, it is in fact quite unnerving to realize just how many natural varieties there are: even more so, when you begin to taste them. Unlike store vegetables with their bland taste and spongy texture, fresh organic vegetables seem to be filled with flavor. The sugars are more pure and the bitter taste that often accompanies certain vegetables such as eggplant or zucchini does not seem to be as prevalent. In my experience, vegetables I was convinced were disgusting based on the store varieties, I really quite enjoy fresh.

Typically members receive a portion of the weekly harvest, which changes as the growing season progresses. During the start of the season, around the second week of June, the farm produces lettuce, spinach, fresh roasted peppers, popcorn, pinto beans, radishes, and peas. Mid-season, around August, come melons and summer squash varieties, corn, cucumbers, and peppers. By the end of September members can begin looking forward to potatoes, winter squash, carrots, turnips, and beets. Onions, beans, broccoli, cabbage, garlic, kohlrabi, tomatoes, Swiss chard, and fresh herbs such as basil, cilantro, dill, and parsley are also grown on the farm and distributed throughout the season.
ranging from colossal to scalloped, golden to green.

If variety in vegetables to you is a pitfall rather than a blessing I would suspect that it is because you are wondering, “What am I supposed to do with this?” (replace “this” with the vegetable of choice—or maybe it was either turnips or Swiss chard). You can also seek the advice of Ryan or Betsy, who are more than understanding when it comes to these types of questions. Their weekly newsletters, that spotlight and include recipes for a different vegetable each week, are also good sources. You can also seek comfort in the other shareholders, the other new members are feeling the same way and the veterans have an wealth of advice.

Experience & Community

While healthy produce and variety can be found in local farmers’ markets, the true beauty of community farming would be missed. The Morrises left their profession to allow you time with yours. Share members can choose the work share or full work share option in which they spend an hour to three a week on the farm, allowing them to have time away from the stress of deadlines, homework, and household chaos. The fresh air, chattering animal life, and variety of work options opens the window to conversation and togetherness.

As the growing season wears on, members will be surprised to realize that fun is not far behind. Just like most other memorable moments, the laughter comes because of the work rather than inspire of it. There truly is pride in a job well done, especially when it involves good friends and great food.

Work shares are limited though, so if the experience is what you are after, you will want to contact the farm as soon as possible. The remaining share options do not require any time investment; however, I would suggest at least one day of touring the farm and visiting with the other members. It makes for a lovely outing and lets you put a face with your food.

At the close of the fall, all share members are invited to the annual Harvest Potluck. It is a time to celebrate the accomplishments of the season. Mingling and chatting, the CSA members, who have now grown to know each other as friends, spend the time eating, dancing, and enjoying live bluegrass entertainment.

All in all, the experience of tskei farming is delightful and highly rewarding. It is nice to have a face on your food; to know where your food is coming from, and how it was grown. In fact, I would have to say that the only pitfall would be overcoming your fear of the unknown vegetable. However, the benefits of new friends, laughter, time with family, and good food make it worth the short drive and extra showers.

Contact Info: Country Roots Farm 29342 Everett Road Pueblo, CO 81006 Phone: 719-948-2206 E-mail: organicminds@earthlink.net http://www.rokket.com/CRF/programprices.htm

** CSA Prices **

Regular Share Plans range from $295-$600 and usually feed from 2 to 4 people, with the largest share allowing 7 extra bushels throughout the season.

Work Share Options offer discounts from $100 to $295 and require 1 to 3 hours a week of work on the farm.

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S unlight stretches through the windows of Art For Living, a small downtown art shop in Trinidad, Colorado. Cascading through glass panels twirled with pink and pale blue, the rays illuminate the orange, green, and deep red of a piece of stained glass and gleam on the surface of glass beads, before slowly tapering off into the studio in the back of the store.

But darkness does not take over from here. Instead, a 5,000-degree torch flame burns brightly as Trinidad City Planner Sean Holme, who is also a skilled glass blower, positions a tube of glass in his hand. Slowly, he rolls it back and forth through the flame until it resembles the glowing cherry of a cigarette.

A native of Washington, Holme used glass blowing to get himself through college and then moved to Trinidad after getting the job of City Planner. He is currently teaching Allyn Bacon, owner of Art For Living, the skill of glass blowing. Trinidad, built on coal mining, may be evolving into an artists’ colony, evident by the small galleries, museums, and different artisans popping up in the area.

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Allyn Bacon practices the art of Glass Blowing

“There’re people who seek out Trinidad for the landscape, just to go out and paint it,” Holme said. He hopes to see Trinidad continue to grow as an art center and has confidence that artists will come to the little town and make it their home.

Consider Allyn Bacon, who shares ownership of Art For Living with fellow artist Marilyn Casey. Bacon, who works with glass, wood, leather—even stones and antlers—came to Trinidad and set up Art For Living with Casey five years ago.

Turning a sheet of glass into an attractive piece of art is one of Bacon’s specialties. The process of creating artful glasswork begins with a little bit of inspiration, a lot of creativity, and a lifetime that can be devoted to perfecting the craft. At the right temperature, glass can be molded, fused, or blown into a vast assortment of shapes and designs. Allyn Bacon and Sean Holme give a very simplified, elementary tour as they take us through the steps of several types of glasswork produced in their studios.
Carrot Soup

1 pound carrots, peeled and sliced
5 cups chicken broth
1 1/2 cup heavy cream
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon sugar
1/8 teaspoon pepper
1/4 teaspoon parsley, dried

1. In medium saucepan combine carrots and broth, bring to a boil over medium heat. Cover and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes or until carrots are tender, adding water if liquid is absorbed too quickly. Carrots need to be very tender, easily cut with spoon with little to no pressure.

2. Puree mixture in a blender or food processor, until smooth. Then pour back into saucepan. Over medium heat, slowly stir in cream, sugar, salt, pepper, and parsley. Reheat, without boiling. Serve immediately.

Chicken Marsala with Peppers

2 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 cup thinly sliced mushrooms
1 cup sweet red pepper, sliced
1 cup green bell pepper, sliced
1 cup onion, sliced
6 Boneless, chicken breasts
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 1/2 teaspoons minced garlic
2 teaspoons oregano
2 teaspoons finely sliced basil leaves
2 teaspoons finely sliced thyme
1/2 cup Marsala wine
1/2 cup chicken stock
1 tablespoon cornstarch
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon ground black pepper

1. Heat olive oil in large skillet over medium heat, add mushrooms, sweet red peppers, green bell peppers, and onion, sauté for 2 minutes. Add chicken breasts and cook until chicken is golden brown and peppers are tender, turning every 2 to 3 minutes.

2. In medium, heavy saucepan heat 1 tablespoon olive oil add garlic, oregano, basil, and thyme, stirring 4 or 5 times. Add fresh lemon juice and marsala wine. In separate bowl beat cornstarch and chicken stock, then add to marsala sauce. Salt and pepper to taste.

3. Pour sauce over chicken and peppers. Serve immediately.
Stuffed Meatballs over Rice

Sauce
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 cloves fresh garlic, minced
2 green peppers, chopped
1 medium yellow squash, chopped
1 medium zucchini, chopped
1 large eggplant, peeled and cubed
6 Roma tomatoes, peeled and chopped
4 tablespoons fresh parsley, finely chopped
2 tablespoons fresh rosemary, removed from stem
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon fresh ground, black pepper

1/2 cup water
2 tablespoons butter

1/2 cup chicken broth

Stuffing

35-40 minutes.

3/4 cup bread crumbs
1/3 cup parmesan cheese
1/8 cup onion, finely chopped
2 eggs, beaten
1 teaspoon garlic salt
1 teaspoon pepper
1 cup olive oil

1. Heat butter and water in large skillet over medium heat, add broccoli, cauliflower, zucchini, and squash. Cover skillet and cook for 5 to 8 minutes or until vegetables are tender.

2. In large mixing bowl combine all the meatball ingredients. Use your hands to thoroughly mix ingredients. Divide mixture into 24-30 portions, place a small amount of stuffing in the core of each and roll into balls.

3. Heat olive oil in large skillet. Fry meatballs for 7-10 minutes or until brown and thoroughly cooked. Serve meatballs over a bed of rice and top with prepared sauce.

Meatballs
2 pounds lean ground turkey, beef, or pork
3/4 cup bread crumbs
1/3 cup parmesan cheese
1/8 cup onion, finely chopped
2 eggs, beaten
1 teaspoon garlic salt
1 teaspoon pepper
1 cup olive oil

1. Heat olive oil in large, heavy skillet over medium heat. Add garlic and green peppers sauté for 2 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add squash, zucchini, eggplant, and tomatoes; sauté for 5 more minutes. Then add parsley, rosemary, thyme, salt, ground black pepper, red pepper, and chicken stock. Reduce heat and simmer for 35-40 minutes.

Stuffing
2 tablespoon butter
1/2 cup water
1 cup broccoli, chopped into bite-size pieces
1 cup cauliflower, chopped into bite-size pieces
1 cup zucchini, chopped into bite-size pieces
1 cup yellow squash, chopped into bite-size pieces

1. Steam beets and asparagus for 20-25 minutes or until tender. Serve either warm or chilled.

Fresh Fruit and Fried Pastry
2 cups cantaloupe
2 cup honeydew melon
2 cups red seedless grapes
12 sheets prepared filo dough
1 teaspoon cinnamon, mixed

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

2. In large mixing bowl combine all the meatball ingredients. Use your hands to thoroughly mix ingredients. Divide mixture into 24-30 portions, place a small amount of stuffing in the core of each and roll into balls.

3. Heat olive oil in large skillet. Fry meatballs for 7-10 minutes or until brown and thoroughly cooked. Serve meatballs over a bed of rice and top with prepared sauce.

Steamed Beets

4 medium beets, peeled and sliced.
1/2 pound asparagus

1. Steam beets and asparagus for 20-25 minutes or until tender. Serve either warm or chilled.

Facts and Myths about the “Wolf-peach”

In the 3rd century, Galen, a biologist and medical doctor, described a “wolf-peach, a poison in a palatable package, used to destroy wolves.”

The French botanist Tournefort labeled the tomato Lycopersicon Esculentum, meaning wolfpeach. He mistakenly equated it to the description by Galen, partly because the tomato belongs to the nightshade family, as do the mandrake and deadly nightshade (belladonna), which are poisonous.

The tomato is native to South and Central America, making it a true American plant.

Peruvian Incas cultivated the tomato as early as 700 AD, trading them to the Aztecs of Central America and Mexico.

Vanzeyst and Gill Van Der Drift, two partners in the global hydroponic greenhouse industry, had been looking for the perfect place to expand. Vanzeyst’s company, Village Farms, had been growing hydroponic,
free tomatoes and specialty bell peppers in Texas, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Mexico. He and Van Der Drift, president of Mountain High Greenhouse Construction, needed new acreage to expand their industry.

Farming has long been one of the largest and most consistent industries of the Pueblo region. Many families have lived and worked the farms east of Pueblo for generations. Coupled with steel-making, farming formed the backbone of the region's economy. Along the Arkansas River corridor, farming has been successful because of the availability of water, good soil conditions, and the Southern Colorado climate. With an average growing season temperature of 70 degrees, an average of 77 percent of every year filled with sunshine, 308 days of fair skies, the area is almost perfect for agriculture. Unfortunately, this creates a challenge for a large, new farming endeavor, as most of the arable land is already in use for crops.

However, the beauty of greenhouse farming is that land otherwise unfit for farming can be used for hydroponics. Since the plants are not grown in the raw earth, poor soil conditions do not affect their quality. Tomatoes and bell peppers, the produce Vanzeyt and Van Der Drift are mainly interested in, can be grown in peat, vermiculite, or a combination of both, which may be added to polystyrene beads or perlite. Other media such as coconut shreds, sand, sawdust, and even rock wool are common as well.

As Van Zeyt talked with the PEDCO representatives, they became more and more excited about creating a series of farms in the region. One of the main concerns of both businesses was whether the area they chose would be compatible for the Dutch farmers that normally form the nucleus of the farms’ management.

In Holland, urban sprawl is rapidly eating up all the farmland, the majority of which is used for greenhouse-style farming. Many farming families are being forced out of production by the skyrocketing prices offered by land developers. “In Holland, it is estimated in the next 10 years, 5,000 acres of greenhouses have to disappear,” Vanzeyt says. Many of these farmers and their families are willing to move to another part of the world to continue their livelihood if the area is a good place to raise their children and make their homes. Pueblo, in both the investors’ opinion, is just such a place.

As the two investors, along with a core group of 12 others, began investigating possible land sites in the region, the beauty of the Pueblo area became increasingly apparent. The large amount of sun, the quality of life, the proximity to major cities, the I-25 transportation corridor, the availability of a ready workforce, institutions that train people in the areas needed for the high-tech, computer-intensive industry, and available, inexpensive land all attracted the group. Although the investors had researched areas in other states, Vanzeyt says, “It’s probably no surprise to the people that Pueblo won, hands down.”

In 1519, Cortez discovered tomatoes growing in Montezuma’s gardens and brought seeds back to Europe, where they were considered ornamental but poisonous.

In 1597, Gerarde’s “Herball” lists tomatoes as “Apples of Love,” or “pommes d’amour” and names both red and yellow varieties, along with the comment “In Spain & those hot regions they use to eat the Apples prepared & boiled with pepper, salt, and oyle: but they yield very little nourishment to the body, and the same naught & corrupt. Likewise, they doe eate the Apples with oile, vinegar & pepper mixed together for sauce to their meate, even as we in these cold countries doe mustard.”

In 16th-century Germany, tomatoes were called the ‘apples of paradise.’

The tomato has also been called ‘Moor’s Apples,’ ‘tomato,’ ‘tomat,’ ‘tomatli,’ ‘pomì d’oro’ or yellow apples, and ‘stinking golden apples,’ and ‘amo- rous apples.’

In 1784, the Landrith Seed Company became the 1st seed company to sell tomato seeds. Landrith once extended George Washington 30 days’ credit on his unpaid bill.

Thomas Jefferson mentioned planting seeds in 1809, 20 years before they were considered widely cultivated.

Robert Gibbon Johnson is credited with dispelling the fears of the tomato as the poisonous ‘wolfpeach’ in 1820. The story goes that he wove down an entire bushel of tomatoes on the Salem, New Jersey, courthouse steps. The story was such common knowledge that in 1994 CBS dramatized it in their “You Are There” series, only to learn later that same year that it was only a fable. We were there, but Johnson wasn’t.

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Oil over medium heat. Add tomatoes, oregano, basil, parsley, rosemary, and garlic sauce for 5 minutes. Stir in tomato sauce. In separate bowl mix water and tomato paste until smooth then add to skillet. Add one small bay leaf, salt, pepper, and baking soda, stirring until bubbles fade. Reduce to medium-low heat and simmer while you prepare the pasta and filling.

2. Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Cook manicotti shells in 5 cups water over slow boil for about 8 minutes. Manicotti should be slightly undercooked. Drain and refill pan with cool water, set aside.

3. While manicotti is cooking steam spinach for 6-8 minutes, or until tender. Remove from pan and chop into 1/2 to 3/4 inch pieces.

4. After peeling outer skin of carrots and discarding, use the peeler to make about 1 cup of carrot peelings. Do not use a grater; the thickness makes the flavor and texture of the carrots to obvious.

5. In a large mixing bowl combine ricotta, carrot peelings, finely chopped cooked spinach, asago, mozzarella, and salt. Stir until ingredients are evenly distributed. With small spoon or pastry bag gently fill manicotti with mixture and place in a single layer in a large casserole. Pour sauce over the top, and sprinkle with asago, and mozzarella cheese. Bake for 25-30 minutes. Serve immediately.

Fried Summer Squash
4 medium yellow squash
1/2 cup flour

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Fried Summer Squash
4 medium yellow squash
1/2 cup flour
Herbed Potatoes

6 pounds red potatoes, cubed
2 teaspoons basil, dried
2 teaspoons parsley, dried
1 1/2 teaspoons rosemary, dried
1 1/2 teaspoons oregano, dried
1 1/4 teaspoons garlic salt
3 tablespoons butter
1 1/4 cup water

Heat the oven to 425 degrees. In a 9 x 9 cassette spread cubed potatoes evenly along the bottom of the pan. Sprinkle basil, parsley, rosemary, oregano, and garlic salt over the top. Cut butter in to 1/4 teaspoon wedges and place randomly on potatoes. Add 1/4 water. Cover in foil and bake for 20-25 minutes or until tender.

Apple-Mint Tart

Dough
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/4 cup sugar
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup butter
2 tablespoons cream or milk
1 egg yolk

Filling
3 pounds baking apples, halved, cored, and cut into 1/2 inch wedges
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
3 tablespoons apple jelly, melted
1/4 cup butter
1/2 teaspoons mint extract

In three small, shallow serving dishes pour 1/3 cup olive oil. Sprinkle each with even amounts of herbs. Serve with hot Italian, sourdough, or French bread.

Spinach and Carrot Stuffed Manicotti

Sauce
3 tablespoons olive oil
12 Roma tomatoes, quartered.
2 tablespoons fresh oregano, finely chopped
2 tablespoons fresh basil, finely chopped
1/2 cup mozzarella cheese
1/4 cup asiago cheese
24 ounces ricotta cheese
12 Manicotti shells
2 teaspoons baking soda
1 1/2 cups water
1 6-ounce can of tomato paste
1 teaspoon fresh, minced garlic
1 small bay leaf
2 tablespoons fresh parsley, finely chopped
2 tablespoons fresh basil, finely chopped
2 tablespoons fresh oregano, finely chopped
12 Roma tomatoes, quartered.

Filling
12 ounces ground beef
3 cloves minced garlic
2 teaspoons olive oil
1 medium onion, finely chopped
1/2 cup dry white wine
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
1/2 teaspoon dried basil
1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
3 tablespoons olive oil
3/4 cup dry white wine
1/2 cup heavy cream
1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
12 manicotti shells

Herb Dip
1 cup olive oil
2 tablespoons oregano, dried
2 tablespoons basil, dried
1 tablespoon tarragon, dried
1 1/2 teaspoons parsley, dried
1 tablespoon fresh rosemary, finely chopped

In a large, deep skillet heat olive

years, because of the drought conditions that have had a stranglehold on the region, this has changed. Water has been rationed in Colorado’s Front Range cities during the dry summer months for several years. The investment group, which by this time had incorporated as the Pueblo Suburban Development LLC (PSD), took their interests directly to the Pueblo Board of Water Works. Within weeks, the board had signed an agreement with PSD for 6,000 acre-feet of raw water each year for 25 years, with a 15-year option agreement. As this water need not be processed by Pueblo’s treatment facilities, the water usage will not affect the amount used by residents of the city. The water will be taken at advantageous times throughout the year and stored under contract with Rocky Mountain Steel Mills at the company’s upper Minnequa Lakes. It will then be processed, and dispensed to the farmers as needed. The water, to be stored in the old Fin & Feather Club ponds, will make the area resemble the way it used to look when the lakes were a fishing and hunting resort, created by the CF & I Steel Corporation in the early 1900s. Many CF & I employees and their families spent time relaxing, boating, fishing, or waterfowl hunting in the area. The resort finally closed in March 1996, when Oregon Steel “reevaluated all of its land assets” according to an Oregon Steel board member.

“Village Farms’ desire is to control production quality of the tomatoes from the cradle to the grave.”

The next hurdle for the enterprise, purchasing subsequent was easily met 700 acres of land south of the city, just east of I-25. PSD paid CF & I Steel $523,700 for 697.75 acres. With land prices in the area varying from $50 an acre to more than $2,000-$5,000 per acre, the deal couldn’t be beat at $750.00 per acre. PSD intends to invest another $740,000 in the acreage, improving it by installing an infrastructure of roads and water mains, and then sell the land in 60-acre plots. The land, adjacent to land owned by PEDCO is in the county, so no PEDCO funds are available to assist with improvements, but Vera Ortega of the governor’s Economic Development Office has asked for a $500,000 Community Development Block Grant for road improvements.

The land will be parcelled into plots and sold to the Dutch growers, who will have their private homes on the land. Each plot will contain one or more 22-acre greenhouses. Each greenhouse complex will have its own boiler plant to provide heat and carbon dioxide for the tomato plants’ needs, computer operated feeding, environmental and moisture control, and its own water filtration and reclamation system. Each modern hydroponic greenhouse will cost from $8 to $10 million.

VanZeyt states that as many as 1,600 seasonal laborers and farmers will be needed to run the greenhouses. Because of the high-tech nature of modern hydroponic greenhouse production, more than 3,5 employees per acre are necessary for the regular operation of the greenhouses, with more at the various harvest times. Computer engineers and operators, quality control specialists, chemists, machinists, and laborers will also be needed to maintain the massive production.

Identify crisis? Poisonous or non, fruit or vegetable? In 1887, the veggie vs. fruit controversy went to the U.S. Supreme Court. The real issue was money: if a vegetable, tomatoes could be subject to import tax, but not if a fruit. The Supreme Court consulted Webster’s Dictionary and The Imperial Dictionary, both defined the tomato as a fruit.

The Supreme Court decreed, “Botanically speaking, tomatoes are the fruit of a vine, just as are cucumbers, squashes, beans and peas. But in the common language of the people...all these are vegetables, which are grown in kitchen gardens, and...are usually served at dinner in, or with, or after the fish, soup, fish, or meats...and not, like fruits generally, as dessert.”

In 1981, the USDA agreed with the Supreme Court and declared catsup also a vegetable to justify cuts in the school lunch program.

In 1897, Joseph Campbell introduced condensed tomato soup, which made the Campbell’s Soup Company the largest in the world. It currently sells more than 360 million cans of tomato soup each year.

Great Britain’s Charles Roberts harvested a four lb. 8 oz tomato in 1974, the size of a child’s head.

In the United States, more tomatoes are consumed than any other fruit or vegetable except potatoes, over 12 million tons.

Yellow varieties of tomatoes are less acidic, and less flavorful, than red.

Tomatoes contain the lycopene and other antioxidants, like beta carotene, which reduce the risk of prostate and other cancers when 10+ servings per week are consumed. Antioxidants protect against free radicals that cause abnormal cell growth, premature aging, cancer, heart disease, and cataracts.
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Southern Colorado Magazine
Issue 3 – Summer 2004
Publisher: Russell Meyer
Editor: Chas S. Clifton
Web Designer: Lydia Hunter
Photo Editor: Randi Gonzales
Production Designer: Tracy Solimeno
Contributors: Randi Gonzales, Marc Boone, Judith Martin, Tracy Solimeno, Tom Coleman, Nicole Maio, Lydia Hunter

Photography: Randi Gonzales, Tracy Solimeno, Marc Boone, Judith Martin, Lydia Hunter, Patricia Mellon Moore, Nicole Maio, Tom Coleman.

Production: Tracy Solimeno, Rae Ann Romero, Nicole Maio, Tom Coleman, Judith Martin

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Although this will be the largest tomato production facility in the region, Village Farms’ produce will not be in competition with local growers. The billions of pounds of tomatoes produced during the extended growing season will be sold to Sam’s Clubs, Wal-Mart Super Stores, and fast food outlets such as Burger King and McDonald’s, all of whom require blemish-free tomatoes of consistent size and quality, the hydroponic greenhouses’ forte. As Spaccamonti says, “Village Farms’ desire is to control production quality of the tomatoes from the cradle to the grave.” PEDCO is considering the possibility of erecting a building on its own nearby land to house a marketing and distribution center for the industry, which would generate even more jobs for the area.

With a minimum nine-month growing season for the greenhouses, the enterprise will rival any business in the Southern Colorado region. Spain, the top greenhouse tomato producer, produces 22-26 lbs./square meter of hydroponically grown tomatoes, compared to an average U.S. outdoor production of less than 8-9 lbs./square meter in Florida.

Mr. Spaccamonti also mentioned the spin-off effect of such an industry: “Very few industries have such great spin-off potential. The local businesses will see immediate increases in revenues from the packaging, machining, transportation, concrete, chemical, and educational needs of the hydroponic greenhouse industry. Revenues from the labor force will greatly add to Pueblo’s tax and revenue income.”

When Albert Vanzeyst first stopped to stretch his legs and saw the slice of the Great American Desert along Interstate 25, he saw gray dirt. After ground-breaking ceremonies, scheduled sometime in 2004, for the massive enterprise, he, Gill Van Der Drift, and Pueblo will be seeing the red and the green of ripe tomatoes and money.

View of land purchased by The Suburban Development Company

Hydroponic greenhouse tomato plants at 3 months old

Tomatoes also contain high levels of vitamin C, iron, phosphorus, vitamins A and B, and potassium. One tomato contains as much fiber as one slice of whole wheat bread, with only 35 calories.

The old-wives’ tale of tomato juice neutralizing skunk stink is actually true. Tomato juice contains a chemical that neutralizes butyl mercaptan the skunk’s prime stink ingredient.

Green tomatoes are great when cooked or pickled, but should not be eaten raw. They, like green potatoes, contain solanine, a toxin to humans in large amounts. The leaves also contain toxins.

In 1984 (1984?) tomato seeds went to outer space. More than 12.5 million “Rutgers California Supreme” tomato seeds populated the orbit for 6 years in a satellite as a NASA and SSE experiment. The crew of the Columbia Space Shuttle retrieved the seeds, which were distributed to more than 3 million school children and 64,000 teachers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and 34 foreign countries.

Though the space seeds germinated and initially grew slightly faster and had elevated levels of chlorophyll and carotenoids than non-space traveled seeds, the effects were temporary.

One participant wrote, “Dear NASA, my name is Matt, I am in grade 2. I really enjoy growing my plants. Here are my results. My earth seed did not grow. My space seed grew but it fell off my desk. It died.”
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