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Bon Appetit! Brook Farm



Eric Engman / Staff photographer

Nationally acclaimed food and entertainment magazine *Bon Appetit* visited Skaneateles this past weekend to spotlight the Skaneateles Festival at Brook Farms and its founders, David and Louise Robinson. Mrs. Robinson waves to friends and family members during a photography shoot for the magazine. The story and pictures will be published in the "Entertaining With Style" section of the June-July 1998 issue of *Bon Appetit*.

National entertainment magazine to feature Skaneateles Festival's Brook Farm fare

Jeanne Dalton
Correspondent

SKANEATELES — Imagine holding a family reunion at your home every summer. Dozens of people eating breakfast, lunch, and dinner for a month. That's how it's been since 1980 at Brook Farm, home of Louise and David Robinson who helped found the Skaneateles Festival.

Some recipes for those extraordinary meals are about to be shared with the entire country. National food and entertainment magazine *Bon Appetit* was in town last week photographing the ambiance of Brook Farm for the magazine's more than 1.2 million subscribers.

The extended family members devoted to music who congregate at Brook Farm each summer play musical instruments and perform in the Skaneateles Festival. If it is true that an army marches on its stomach, it also holds that violinists, pianists, and woodwind players can work up a healthy appetite after hours of practicing.

Aided by local festival supporters, the Robinsons provide delicious meals, Louise overseeing the kitchen preparation and David harvesting fresh produce out of his garden.

Collins Communications of Auburn, which does public relations work for the festival, sent *Bon Appetit* a letter about the annual hospitality effort to welcome musicians.

Starr Osborne, owner of the firm, said several of Louise's recipes underwent rigorous food testing and about two weeks of studio photography in *Bon Appetit*'s Los Angeles kitchen.

Louise's cold cucumber and mint soup, six bean salad, muffuletta (a New Orleans layered sandwich), old-fashioned cole slaw and blackberry pie will be featured in the June-July 1998 issue of *Bon Appetit*.

The Robinsons have always had a keen interest in food prepared and shared with others. For years, Louise and her daughters would choose a gourmet centerfold from a monthly magazine, each cooking a portion of the repast and then sitting down to enjoy their efforts.

Now some of their best recipes will be available to readers who cannot make the drive down the maple-shaded lane to the spacious lakeside home.

Concert pianist Robert Weirich, who serves as the festival's artistic director, said Brook Farm makes the festival unique in the entire country. According to Weirich, in every other place, musicians to a large extent have to fend

for themselves, finding lodging and a place to eat.

"Here, they feel as though they've come home. They play better than they've ever played," he said.

Violist Michelle LaCourse has returned each year since 1985. LaCourse, who teaches viola and chamber music at Boston University and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, said it is her favorite week of year. While she sometimes performs at music festivals—considered more "high profile," Skaneateles is her favorite. LaCourse said she enjoys fellow musicians, her hosts, an appreciative audience in a beautiful setting, and the great food.

"All the musicians gather to eat lunch together and go home weighing more than when we came. It's a warm sense of community," she said.

Festival performances will conclude with three evenings of music this week. At Brook Farm, whether the picnic tables feature a soufflé with Schubert or bouillabaisse with Bach, it's sure to be hectic in Louise Robinson's kitchen until the last note is played.

She takes it in stride. When the filming crew from *Bon Appetit* showed up, she did what comes naturally. She gave them something to eat.