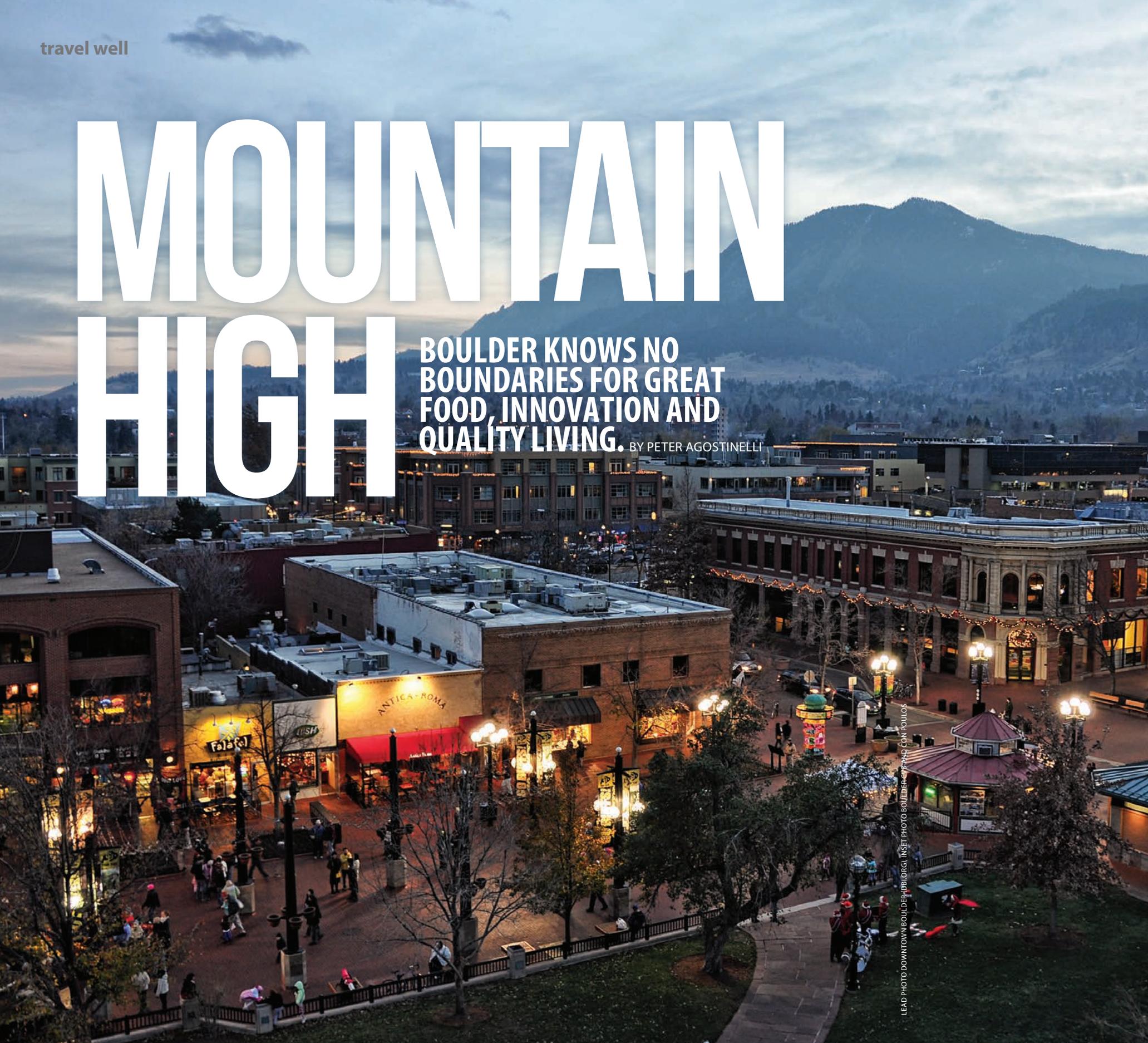


MOUNTAIN HIGH

BOULDER KNOWS NO BOUNDARIES FOR GREAT FOOD, INNOVATION AND QUALITY LIVING. BY PETER AGOSTINELLI



LEAD PHOTO: DOWNTOWN BOULDER (BBJ.ORG); INSET PHOTO: BOULDER (WV) AND CON. POULOS



A stunning sunset spread shot on chef Eric Skokan's farm from his cookbook, *Farm Fork Food*

Eric Skokan is a lot like many other chefs. He runs two thriving restaurants, spends hours every day poring over ingredients and dish ideas, and plans ever-changing menus around the seasons of his home base of Boulder, Colorado.

And that's only a portion of the chef's schedule. Skokan balances family life with his wife, Jill, and their four children. Last year he also finished writing a cookbook about his culinary approach to the four seasons of Front Range-area cuisine. Based on nearly 20 years of cooking in Colorado, *Farm Fork Food* (Kyle Books, 2014) highlights the food served at Skokan's noted Black Cat Bistro in Boulder and its popular next-door neighbor,

Bramble & Hare, a late-night hot spot billed as a farmhouse kitchen and pub.

But that's not all. Somehow, the chef is a full-time farmer as well. On a 130-acre property just outside Boulder, the Skokans and their farm team cultivate heirloom vegetables and fruits and raise a variety of pigs, sheep, chickens, turkeys and ducks. (While some of the fields are already certified organic, Skokan is in the process of transitioning more of the Farm's fields to certification.) Black Cat Farm supplies produce and meats to the two restaurants along with a retail farm stand the Skokans operate at the weekly Boulder Farmers' Market.

From the outside it may sound like a flurry of busyness. In reality, it might be a perfect example of the





With weekend visitors reaching as many as 5,000, the Boulder Farmers' Market is where innovative disrupters come to thrive.

creative drive behind this city just north of Denver.

“The thing in Boulder that separates it from other communities is entrepreneurial ethos,” Skokan says. “Entrepreneurs from around the country are moving here to open businesses and try things out, and the community here is becoming more and more embracing of innovation, especially in the food industry.”

Much of the natural foods industry has also emerged in Boulder in recent decades, Skokan adds. Many brands, such as Celestial Seasonings, Earthbound Farm Organic and Horizon, have their roots in Boulder. Those and other growing companies such as Udi’s (gluten-free breads) and Justin’s (nut butters) have evolved into

national brands with broad reach.

The Boulder Farmers’ Market has been instrumental in this development, Skokan says. “You have this mix now of different factors, and it’s kind of taking on a life of its own,” he adds. “You have entrepreneurs coming in from around the country. You have the farmers’ market, which is a great platform to allow people to taste a new product... three, four or five thousand people a weekend. We’re at the point now where we’re wondering, ‘What is the next cool thing?’ which is a great place to be in.”

BREAKTHROUGHS AND TRANSFORMATIONS

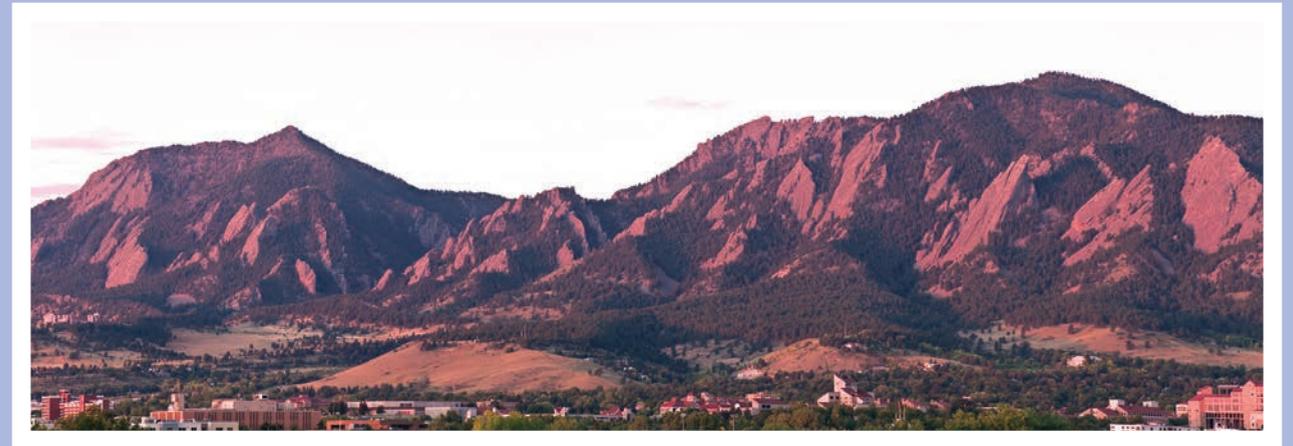
It’s all part of what gives Boulder, with its tidy population of 100,000, a big-city vibe. A college town and small

city like no other, Boulder enjoys a combination of natural resources and a track record for innovation that few places can match.

Successful athletes, business owners, scientists and scholars are drawn by its eclectic mix of community resources, economic investments, environmental preservation and like minds. The city sits at nearly 5,500 feet of elevation in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains along the Flatirons, a postcard-worthy range of sedimentary rock reaching up from the foothills easily visible when driving north from Denver and nearby towns such as Lafayette, Longmont and Louisville. They also signal the much higher Rockies, home to the region’s famous snowcapped peaks and valleys.

Boulder also enjoys a natural ring of insulation against creeping development from surrounding towns. In the 1960s, its citizens voted for a sales tax to pave the way for the acquisition of open lands around the city. Today that land provides a natural buffer of farms, wildlife and miles of trails.

While newcomers and travelers have grown smitten with the Rockies and other regional wonders, many have looked no further than the city of Boulder itself for reasons to move



“IT’S A TOWN THAT SO APPRECIATES GOOD FOOD, GOOD QUALITY AND GOOD QUALITY OF LIFE.”

there. Entrepreneurs draw inspiration, intellectual riches and capital from Boulder’s technology and creative communities. The area’s heritage of earth and atmospheric sciences are internationally known. Cyclists, runners and other athletes flock to the local sports community and infrastructure.

Even more successful professionals are simply attracted to the area for its high quality of life and progressive policies. Residents and tourists alike enjoy 300 days of sunshine during a typical year in Boulder, says Kim Farin, director of communications for the Boulder Convention and Visitors Bureau. A wealth of sunlight may seem at odds with a region known for snow-covered mountains, but it’s a boon for locals and vacationers.

Boulder’s abundance is also immediately clear in the depth and accessibility of compelling foods, craft beer, fine wines and coffee bars. On the eastern edge of the Pearl Street main drag, Frasca Food and Wine is a fine-dining destination with a specific focus on foods and wines of the northeastern Italian region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia. The restaurant is co-owned by a master sommelier who presides over a nearly unheard-of wine list that would stand out in the world’s largest cities.

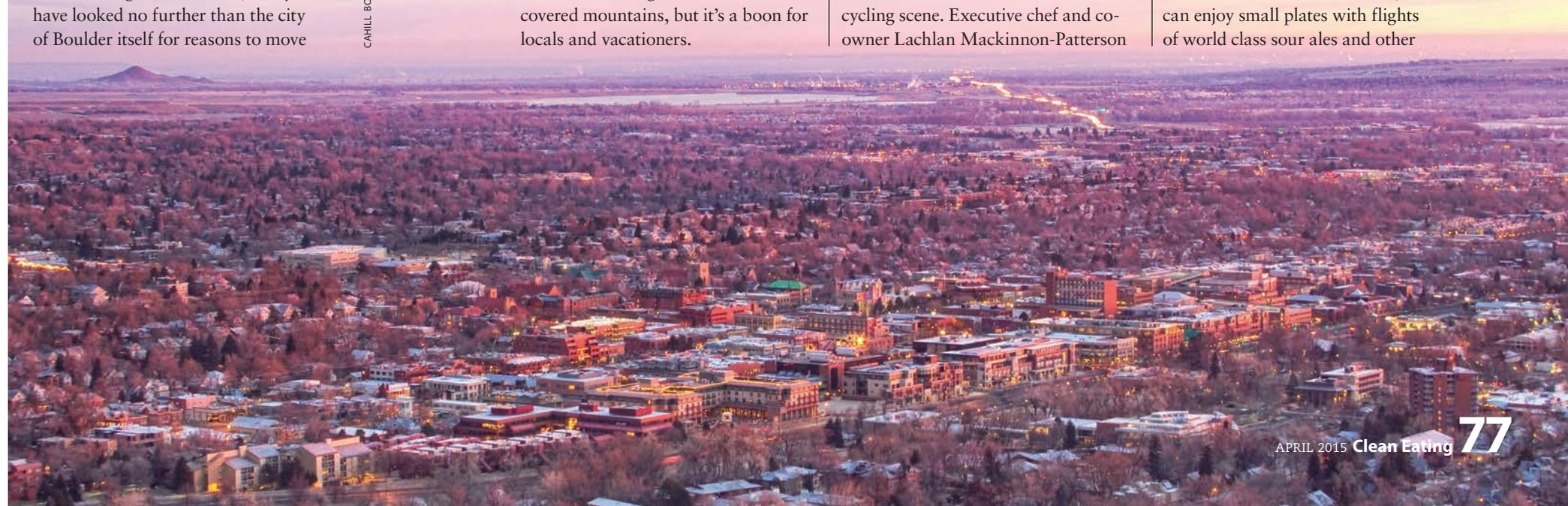
Frasca’s most public face, Master Sommelier Bobby Stuckey, is an internationally recognized wine expert who also happens to be an avid cyclist who was drawn to Boulder’s intense cycling scene. Executive chef and co-owner Lachlan Mackinnon-Patterson

earned the James Beard Foundation’s Best Chef honor in the Southwest.

Frasca’s sister restaurant, Pizzeria Locale, benefits from local interest in high-quality foods. The Neapolitan pizzeria generated enough buzz to spark a partnership with the Denver-based Chipotle Mexican Grill food chain, and two new fast-casual pizza locations modeled after the original opened in Denver in winter 2013 and fall 2014.

Boulder is also home to The Kitchen, a seasonally driven bistro with a focus on local, fresh foods. The Kitchen is literally side-by-side with its casual sibling, The Kitchen Next Door, a laid-back spot that feels like a spiffed-up neighborhood pub. Diners there can order everything from simple salads packed with locally grown vegetables to perfect burgers of pastured beef sourced from area farms. Before that food arrives, one can enjoy small plates with flights of world class sour ales and other

CAHILL BOULDER CITY AND MOUNTAINS BO INSOGNA - IWRBO.COM LAUGHING GOAT PHOTO BY CAROLINE TREADWAY CAROLINETREADWAY.COM FARMERS' MARKET AMY ALETHEIA





craft beers from renowned Boulder breweries such as Avery and Upslope or from New Belgium and Odell in nearby Fort Collins.

“Great food – innovative food – is being driven down... and instead of being just for the well-heeled, the innovation and the craft and the technique are all getting pushed down to more accessible levels,” Skokan says. “So instead of having really great food only on your birthday, now you can have it on a Thursday. It’s like an everyday thing, which I think is pretty amazing.”

It’s part of the scene that supports Will Frischkorn, a retired professional cyclist and lifelong food enthusiast, and his wife, Coral. Together they’re proprietors of Cured, a specialty cheese and cured-meats shop on the busy Pearl Street stretch near the downtown pedestrian mall.

Cured shares space with a specialty espresso bar and coffee roaster and also incorporates a friendly wine shop. The collective is another example of the surprisingly cosmopolitan community that manages to mix artisanal products with an approachable, laid-back mountain spirit.

“It’s a wonderful place to live,” says Frischkorn, an animated West Virginia native who moved to Boulder at age 18 for his cycling career. “When we decided to start Cured, I think we quickly entertained the idea of whether we should look at other places. Are there other communities that might be a better fit for what we want to create? And pretty quickly we realized, no way. Boulder’s more where we want to be.”

“It’s a town that so appreciates good food, good quality and good quality of life,” he adds. “And we were fortunate enough to stick to what we knew, where we’re from and what we loved, and start the business there.”

And that’s squarely in keeping with the ways in which Boulder has distinguished itself over the past 20 years – by drawing great people with a high standard of living, Skokan says.

“They’re smart, intelligent, hardworking professionals, and they’ve decided along the way that quality of life is number one on their list,” the chef says. “They’re successful enough that they can do what they do wherever, and they’ve chosen here because the quality of life is so high. People are here to enjoy life.”

Dining & Drink Destinations

Boulder is stocked with foodie spots loved by locals and visitors alike for seasonal and locally sourced food, wine, kombucha and craft beer.

Cured

Stop by this small but well-appointed shop owned and operated by husband-wife team Will and Coral Frischkorn. Artisanal cheeses, cured meats, wines and specialty goods are just a few of the delights, not to mention options for meals to go. Cured shares space with a coffee and espresso bar operated by Boxcar Coffee Roasters, a Boulder source for specialty coffee that’s roasted in small batches in Denver. curedboulder.com

Shine

For a slightly unconventional meal, house-brewed craft beer or special “magical potions,” look to the Shine sisters for a truly Boulder experience. Shine spotlights local producers with an eclectic menu of clean eats for brunch, lunch, dinner and late-night bites. Triplets Jill, Jessica and Jennifer Emich are co-owners of the restaurant and community gathering space that also hosts live performances, an array of workshops and other events. shineboulder.com

Black Cat Bistro and Bramble & Hare

Both spots are chef Eric Skokan’s restaurants, and each is worth a visit. Settle in at Black Cat Bistro for a fine-dining experience that features organic produce and meats from Black Cat Farm. Bramble & Hare is the bistro’s relaxed next-door sibling that serves equally delicious seasonal fare but with a more casual twist. blackcatboulder.com, brambleandhare.com

The Kitchen Next Door

This friendly downtown eatery is a modern interpretation of the gastropub, with starters such as kale chips and hummus with flatbread as well as hearty salads and burgers plus vegetarian and gluten-free dishes. Daily “community hour” specials include lighter fare to snack on while sampling local craft beer and house wines. thekitchen.com/nextdoor-boulder

Warm Salt-Baked Beet Salad

WITH POPPED RICE & CANDIED GRAPEFRUIT ZEST

SERVES 4.

Chef Eric Skokan plays with the elements of a classic beet salad by incorporating grapefruit – including grapefruit juice, segments and candied zest – as well as avocado and toasted almonds.

INGREDIENTS:

- 3 large beets plus 1 cup beet leaves (chopped if leaves are large), divided
- 3 to 4 cups coarse sea or kosher sea salt
- 3 tbsp basic vinaigrette (see recipe, at right), divided
- 1 red grapefruit
- 2 tbsp raw honey
- 1 tbsp sunflower oil, plus additional for greasing pan
- ¼ cup wild rice
- 1 large onion, sliced into rings
- Fine sea salt, to taste
- 1 avocado, peeled, pitted and cut into chunks
- ¼ cup chopped toasted unsalted almonds

INSTRUCTIONS:

ONE: Preheat oven to 400°F. Place beets in a heavy roasting pan and cover with coarse sea salt. Roast for about 45 minutes. **(NOTE:** During baking, salt will form a crust around beets. To test for doneness, break a small piece of the crust away then insert a knife to see if it pierces beet easily.) Remove salt from beets.

TWO: Transfer beets to a colander and rinse under cool water. Peel and rinse lightly again. Cut into wedges, place in a bowl and dress with 2 tbsp vinaigrette.

THREE: Using a peeler, remove a piece of zest from grapefruit then julienne to yield 1 tbsp. Over a bowl to catch juices, peel and segment grapefruit. Measure 2 tbsp juice; reserve grapefruit segments.

FOUR: Prepare candied zest: In a small saucepan on high, combine zest with enough water to cover. Bring to a boil for 1 minute. Discard water; return zest to pan with fresh water. Repeat process until zest is no longer bitter (about four times). After draining the final time, combine zest with honey and grapefruit juice in saucepan and boil on medium-high until reduced by half. Set aside.

FIVE: In a medium saucepan on high, heat 1 tbsp oil until shimmering. Add rice and cook, stirring constantly, until it pops, 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer to paper towels.

SIX: In a lightly greased grill pan on high, grill onion rings until lightly charred on both sides. Transfer to a medium bowl. Add remaining 1 tbsp vinaigrette, beet leaves and fine salt, and toss.

SEVEN: Divide beet leaves mixture among serving plates. Top with roasted beets, grapefruit segments, avocado, almonds, candied zest and popped rice.

NUTRIENTS PER SERVING (¼ OF RECIPE):

CALORIES: 367, **TOTAL FAT:** 24 g, **SAT. FAT:** 3 g, **MONOUNSATURATED FAT:** 12 g, **POLYUNSATURATED FAT:** 8 g, **CARBS:** 38 g, **FIBER:** 8 g, **SUGARS:** 16 g, **PROTEIN:** 6 g, **SODIUM:** 337 mg, **CHOLESTEROL:** 0 mg

Make your beet salad sing with sweet-tart candied grapefruit zest.

SHINE PHOTO: MERRICK CHASE PHOTOGRAPHY; RECIPE PHOTOGRAPHY BY NATALIE PERRY



Basic Vinaigrette

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP.

INGREDIENTS:

- ½ clove garlic, crushed
- 1 cup sunflower oil
- 2 tbsp red wine vinegar
- 1 tsp sea salt

INSTRUCTIONS:

In a container with a tight-fitting lid, combine all ingredients. Seal container and shake vigorously. Immediately pour out desired amount of vinaigrette. Re-shake to combine between uses if it stands longer than 15 seconds. Store in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.



Chef and author Eric Skokan balances family life with his wife, Jill, and their four children. His cookbook, *Farm Fork Food* (Kyle Books, 2014), highlights his culinary approach to the four seasons of Front Range-area cuisine. ©