

COOK WITH THE WHOLE FARM

OUR LONG-TERM HEALTH—AND THAT OF THE LAND—REQUIRES A CUISINE THAT TRANSFORMS AGRICULTURE
BY DAN BARBER

IS FARM-TO-TABLE COOKING SUSTAINABLE? The movement began as a reaction against our expectations for dinner: what I call the first plate, an enormous, protein-centric entrée (usually meat) with a smattering of vegetables. Farm to table, or second plate, champions sustainably raised meat and vegetables but relies on the same architecture. Both models leave farmers overproducing soil-depleting crops like tomatoes and raising animals like lambs to sell mostly just the chops. Our tastes have to change.

What we need is a new conception of food, a third plate—a different way of assembling a dish, writing a menu and sourcing ingredients. It combines tastes based not on convention but rather on the health of the environment that produces them. It encourages you to cook with the whole farm, recognizing that what we eat is part of an integrated system. It champions an entire class of crops (and cuts of meat) that have gone unrecognized or that by engaging modern plant breeders will require support in the future. It encourages the right kind of demand for what a farm can supply. And like all great cuisines, it forces us into a pattern of eating that adds rather than subtracts, replenishes rather than drains.

Barber is executive chef and co-owner of Blue Hill restaurants and author of The Third Plate: Field Notes on the Future of Food



A SAMPLE 'THIRD PLATE' MENU

2
BORDELAISE SAUCE
A twist on a traditional sauce, made with bones and pieces of beef shank, it allows secondary cuts of meat to be used more completely.

1
PARSNIP STEAK
Traditionally marginalized on our plates, here the vegetable takes center stage, turning the iconic American steak dinner on its head.

3
BONE MARROW
Whole-farm cooking doesn't forgo indulgence. Bone marrow is a deliciously velvety upgrade on the signature slab of butter.

4
CREAMED SPINACH
A staple of any steak dinner, this creamed spinach comes with a swirl of meat marmalade—protein in yet another supporting role.

5
CARAMELIZED ONIONS
Searching for a sweeter onion? Forget heirlooms. In the future, plant breeders will create new varieties of onions (and other veggies) adapted to specific regions and cuisines.

6
RED-CABBAGE KETCHUP
Who needs monocrops of tomatoes? Embracing lowly vegetables like cabbage improves diversity and supports soil health.