

South River Currents

NOURISHING LIFE FOR THE HUMAN SPIRIT SINCE 1979.™

Fall/Winter, 2002



Matt Rulevich delivers his first bag of locally grown organic soybeans to South River.

Small is Beautiful and Strong!

November 4, 2002: I am so excited to welcome Matt Rulevich from nearby White Oak Farm, as he delivers his first ton of certified organic soybeans to our door. He will deliver another 5000 pounds in December.

The amount of soybeans we use in a year to make South River Miso can be grown on 5 to 10 acres of good land. Our needs are like a tiny drop in the vast ocean of soybeans grown in the USA. Yet, that ocean is increasingly vulnerable to contamination from genetically engineered beans. For 21 years, our organic soybeans have come from the Midwest where soybean crops cover thousands upon thousands of acres.

Massachusetts is not a soybean state, nor is it big farm country. Rather than 4000 acres, Matt Rulevich manages forty: one large, undulating field, half a mile long. The field is divided into six strips, which follow the contours of the land. In any given year, only one of these contour strips is planted into soybeans. The rest are planted into other phases of a seven-year rotation through which each strip will successively pass: one year in soybeans, one year in small grain (eg. winter wheat), three years in alfalfa hay, and one year in seed corn, before returning again to soybeans.

Matt lives at White Oak Farm with his wife, Gina, a professional nurse, and Rees, their strap-ping, seven-month-old son. They lease the land from the New England Small Farm Institute. Matt has a bachelor's degree in mathematics, experience in restaurant management, and a life-long interest in agriculture. In his early twenties, he apprenticed on a horse-powered vegetable farm in Vermont. Before coming to White Oak Farm, he earned a Masters degree in agriculture at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

To grow successive crops of soybeans in New England takes a lot of Yankee gumption: a strong dose of patience, steady determination, and a lot of hard-to-find special equipment. To see Matt deliver his beans with quiet self-assurance in these strange and modern times is to witness a kind of miracle. It is like beholding a determined and forgiving blade of grass coming up through the cracks in a hard and lifeless pavement.

Food that is locally and organically grown

from open-pollinated seeds and plants, tended by people with open hearts, awake minds, and wills fired in service to the Wholeness of Life, will be the foundation for new and diverse, sustainable communities around our precious, planetary, garden home. Thank you, Matt Rulevich!

Christian Elwell

From Seed to Harvest

The story of one soybean crop from seed to harvest at White Oak Farm can be told in about nine chapters. Here is a brief sketch:

1) In the fall, after the ears are picked from the corn crop, the stalks are chopped back into the soil. The ground is planted to winter rye.

2) The following May, the rye, now two feet tall and green, is ploughed back into the warming soil. For two weeks the land is left alone while the rye breaks down in the earthy womb. The soil is then harrowed into a smooth seedbed for sowing.

3) This year Matt planted two varieties of soybeans, with extra seed for each: "One for the goose, one for the crow, one to rot, and one to grow. There's always the deer to contend with too," he adds. "They love soybeans."

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Life's Work, An Invitation

- ☞ To drink at the Well of Life with no hesitation, no regrets, and no self doubt.
- ☞ To know I have the choice either to be controlled by my reactions (to others, to events) or to liberate myself from suffering.
- ☞ To know my Sacred Escort within, who brings kindness to my pain.
- ☞ To know the source of my pain and heal it, not defend against it.
- ☞ To know freedom from the fear of facing myself.
- ☞ To be free from the grip of the past.
- ☞ To never again believe, "This should not be happening to me."

[Adapted from *Undefended Love*, by Jett Psaris and Marlena Lyons (New Harbinger Publications: 2000. www.newharbinger.com), with thanks to Sandra Boston of the Conscious Communications Institute, Greenfield, MA.]

Miso More than Food: Life! Healing in Rwanda

This fall at the Natural Foods Expo in Washington, D.C., I was pleasantly surprised when a friendly man, Gilbert Boulay, stopped by our booth and offered me a sample of broth from his thermos. It was a simple and delicious miso broth (see recipe at right) using miso, which he and his wife made themselves in Quebec. I knew right away: these people are off to a great start with miso making. I invited him to sit down in our booth and tell me his miso story. An amazing story it is!

It begins in central Africa, in Rwanda, in the 1980's. Gilbert is an advisor to the Rwandan Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. His wife, Suzanne Dionne, with a background in food science and agronomy, is working in nutrition centers introducing health-promoting food products. She also counsels various women's groups, helping them to start up small food processing businesses.

Rwanda is one of the most densely populated regions of Africa. The traditional diet includes cassava, a kidney-type red bean, foxtail millet, sweet potatoes, yams, and some dairy products. In the 1970's, with concern that the nutritional needs of the growing population were not being adequately met, the soybean was introduced to supplant native foods and to increase soil fertility. But no one had considered how to use the soybean for food.

As our story continues, Suzanne and Gilbert reach the conviction that if Rwandans are to rely upon the soybean as a main agricultural crop, they must learn about miso. Suzanne makes a quick trip to study miso making with Yoshi and Lulu Yoshihara in British Columbia. She returns to Rwanda ready to introduce miso, making her first batch at home in the capital, Kigali.

Now, how to introduce this new food to the people of Rwanda? Destiny often lends a helping hand when we commit ourselves to an ideal for the common good. Gilbert has a friend in the government who suffers from high levels of cholesterol. When Suzanne introduces him to miso he feels his condition improve. It so happens that this government official is also a speechwriter for the president of Rwanda. One night, Gilbert and Suzanne listen to the president's annual address to the nation on

their radio. In the speech, the president urges the people of Rwanda to open their minds and hearts to new and unfamiliar foods that can bring improved health to their nation. He actually names miso in his speech! [Can you imagine, the president of the United States in his State of the Union address proclaiming the wonderful benefits of natural, organic foods including miso?!!]

Back to our story: soon after the Rwandan president's speech, Suzanne manages to gather the means to rent a house and turn it into a miso workshop and neighborhood restaurant. She soon has 22 people on her staff making miso and other natural foods. Several women come to work with her for a month devising recipes to integrate miso into traditional Rwandan dishes.

The news about Suzanne and her work begins to spread. One day a Belgian doctor from the hospital in Kigali arrives at her restaurant with a five-year-old girl and her mother. The girl has the frail body of a three-year-old. For several years she has been unable to hold down her food longer than twenty minutes. The doctor thinks that she may have a serious lack of digestive enzymes, and he wonders if miso, as a last resort, might help.

With no guarantees, Suzanne gives the child a clear miso broth, and returns to conversation with the doctor and mother. After half an hour the girl has not thrown up! She asks for more broth! The mother weeps.

For some days, the child continues to eat the miso broth. She even begins licking miso from the spoon, her body apparently craving the probiotic enzymes and microorganisms present in it. After two weeks, her mother calls to say with delight that her daughter is asking for regular foods, that she is able to hold them down and digest them.

A Simple and Delicious Miso Broth

Yield: 1 cup. Preparation time: 5 minutes

- 1 tsp miso
- 1 cup hot water
- 1 pinch chopped green onion
- 1 pinch fresh parsley

Dilute the miso in some hot water, and then fill the cup with the remaining water. Add the green onion and parsley.

This energy-enhancing broth is a great substitute for coffee and tea.

—RECIPE from
MISO MORE THAN FOOD: LIFE
(page 34)



This and other similar experiences were a major turning point for Suzanne, as she realized more fully the healing potential of miso. In 1992, she returned to Canada to study business management with the goal of establishing an organic food-processing business based on her own research and development of natural and organic products.

After receiving her MBA, Suzanne and Gilbert launched their business, Les Aliments Massawippi, in the lake region of North Hatley, Quebec. ("Massawippi" is an Algonquin name, meaning "deep water".)

They made their first batch of commercial miso in 2001 for local distribution. In June 2001, Suzanne received the Prix Entrepreneurship Féminin at the

Concours Québécois en Entrepreneurship for creating two new health food products. She published the French edition of her book about miso in December 2001, which to date has sold 4000 copies. The English translation was published in July 2002 (See sidebar at left).

Suzanne and Gilbert believe that unpasteurized miso is one of the single most beneficial foods for health on the planet, and that a daily dose can go along way in preventing sickness and disease. Bravo! And Thank You! —C.E.

New Book Available from South River



We are pleased to offer Suzanne Dionne's new book, MISO MORE THAN FOOD: LIFE. Contents include: the ten healing benefits of miso, its nutritional qualities, and the importance of its enzymes and probiotic organisms. More than 40 simple and delicious recipes included.

Spiral bound, 82 pages, \$10.



Gaella Elwell (right) is your most likely phone contact when you call, 10-1 Eastern time, Monday through Friday. Carol Caines (left) processes your orders for shipment.



Handling Your Orders

Robin Cole, general manager, keeps everyone working together for the whole.



Steve Freiman packs your orders and prepares them for shipment.

From Seed to Harvest

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4) After the soybeans emerge, weeds are controlled by two separate cultivations: one in late June, another in late July.

5) If all goes well the soybean plants grow quickly; the Vinton variety can grow to 5 feet tall. Matt walks through the field to remove by hand any remaining weeds that might interfere with harvesting. He removes undesirable, variant soybean plants as well.

6) The seedpods start to fill out in August. In late summer, as the outer light diminishes, the soybeans drop their leaves. The seedpods dry out and become tan in color. Matt has to wait for the right conditions to go onto the field with his ten-foot-wide combine. (Most of Matt's equipment is from the 1950's and 60's, gathered from farm auctions. Most modern equipment is not designed for his small-scale operation.)

New England weather has always been a challenge for farmers. The soybean plants need to be perfectly dry to harvest with the combine. An afternoon of rain can mean two days for the plants to dry out again. Once the conditions are right, Matt can harvest his whole crop in a matter of hours: another advantage of a small-scale farm.

7) The shelled beans are loaded into a grain wagon. From there, they go into wooden storage bins in the barn. The beans are dried to about 14% moisture content for optimum storage.

8) Matt cleans and sorts the beans with special equipment. He makes a final inspection as they pass over a sorting table. Finally he bags them for delivery to us at South River. Now the beans will begin their own journey of sacrifice, becoming miso.

9) Meanwhile, back on the farm, the cycle continues, unbroken. Matt disks in the remains of the soybean plants and sows that section of land into winter wheat. He prepares the contour strip planted this year into corn for next year's crop of soybeans. He has already saved aside the seed.

—C.E.

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Japanese Salmon Steak

Cooked this way, salmon literally melts in the mouth. The miso marinade tenderizes and lends an exquisite taste to the dish. It is an awakening of the taste buds!

Serves 6 persons

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes

- 6 Salmon steaks
- 4 Tbsp. white wine
- 2 Tbsp. miso [we recommend *South River Azuki Bean Miso*, ed.]
- 1 tsp. honey
- 1 inch fresh ginger minced
- 2 cloves garlic minced
- 4 Tbsp. olive oil

In a large bowl, combine the wine with the miso. Add the honey, ginger and garlic. While combining the ingredients, pour the oil in a steady

stream. Marinate the salmon in the sauce, in the refrigerator, for at least 1 hour.

Heat a heavy pan over medium heat and begin cooking the steaks, adding the rest of the marinade. Cook the steaks on one side for 5 minutes, turn the steaks over, cover the pan and cook for another 5 minutes. Serve hot.

This salmon dish can be served with wild rice, green beans with sesame oil and garlic, oriental salad, or sushi.

This recipe is from the book, *MISO MORE THAN FOOD: LIFE!* Page 49, available from South River Miso. See article inside.

A photo of the South River, as it flows through our farm.



Line drawing by Akiko Aoyagi in The Book of Miso

Miso — Natural Probiotic Medicine

Miso is prized for its ability to aid in the digestion and assimilation of other foods. At least four digestive agents are contained in all non-pasteurized miso: natural digestive enzymes, lactic-acid producing bacteria (*Lactobacillus* and *Pediococcus* species), salt-resistant yeasts, and the mold and other microorganisms present in koji. Only the very hardiest microorganisms are able to survive the rigors of several years' fermentation in the presence of salt. Thus they and their enzymes are well suited

to continue their work in the large and small intestines where they break down or digest complex proteins, carbohydrates, and fats into simpler, more easily assimilable molecules. In Japan, commercially available digestive enzymes are often made from the same type of koji used to make miso.

From THE BOOK OF MISO, by William Shurtleff and Akiko Aoyagi (Ten Speed Press, 1983), page 21

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