

South River Currents

NOURISHING LIFE FOR THE HUMAN SPIRIT SINCE 1979.™

Fall 2004

Celebrating Twenty Five Years!

It all started back in Boston in 1977, when Christian drew a rough sketch of a farm on a paper napkin in an Irish Pub. Or maybe it all started earlier that year as we were searching for answers about health and life through macrobiotics, motivated by the early deaths of our fathers at ages 51 and 45.

Surely the seeds were planted while we studied in California with Naburo Muramoto at his school for Fermented Foods and Oriental Medicine, and where we met Thom Leonard.

Thom went on to found the Ohio Miso Company with his friend, Dick Kluding. In March 1979, as recorded in their log book, they began their first batch of Mellow Barley miso under cold, clear skies with the moon in Leo.



Christian, Isaiah,
and Anni making
miso in 1984.



Meanwhile, we settled on 60 acres of farmland along the South River in Conway, Massachusetts. When Thom asked if we wanted carry on with his fledgling business, we answered, "Yes." In November, 1980, we transported 13 tons of Ohio Miso and equipment to our farm. That first winter, with numb fingers, we packed miso out of our barn and hauled it across the river by horse drawn wagon to meet the UPS truck.

By 1981, we renamed the business South River Miso Company. A post and beam shop was constructed by master craftsman, Jerry Sawma, and a large masonry stove was built, which both heats the shop and cooks the ingredients for fine traditional miso.



The Elwell
family, summer
2004: Christian,
Anni, Gaella,
and Isaiah.

Since those first years, over 40 people have apprenticed, or been hired, bartered, lived-in, or commuted to South River. They have helped produce, pack, and ship the miso, run the office, listen to our problems (and we to theirs), played with our kids, and tended the gardens.

We bow deeply to all of you who have offered your unique gifts so willingly and lovingly to South River Miso.

This summer we took another leap forward and began constructing a new post and beam fermentation building.

We would not be happily celebrating our twenty-fifth without you, our adventurous and steadfast miso customers, some whom have been with us since the early days. (For the first seven years we operated without an answering machine!) All of you have kept us going with regular orders, patience with our evolving systems, warm phone calls, and ardent miso love letters.

We deeply thank each of you as we celebrate our first 25 years! May we all move forward in good health and in good will for all our relations!

Christian and Gaella Elwell

Walking the Effervescent Path with Sandor Katz

This September we had a visit from Sandor Katz, a vibrant spirit and author of *Wild Fermentation: The Flavor, Nutrition, and Craft of Live-Culture Foods*. His book bubbles with enthusiasm, hands-on guidance, and pure joy. Sandor lives at Short Mountain, a community in rural Tennessee. He is an inspiring presenter who likes to travel and spread the word. Visit his website: wildfermentation.com.

What follows are some of our favorite quotes from his book.

This book is my song of praise and devotion to fermentation. For me, fermentation is a health regimen, a gourmet art, a multicultural adventure, a form of activism, and a spiritual path, all rolled into one.

Fermentation has been an important journey of discovery for me, and I invite you to join me along this effervescent path, well trodden for thousands of years yet largely forgotten in our time and place, bypassed by the superhighway of industrial food production.

I have AIDS and need my body to be as strong and resilient as it can be. Fermented foods make my body feel well nourished, and I eat them regularly as a health practice. Fermented foods not only nourish, they help protect us from potentially harmful organisms and contribute to immunity.

Fermentation is easy. Anyone can do it, anywhere, with the most basic tools. Humans have been fermenting [foods] longer than we've been writing words or cultivating the soil...



Sandor Katz, author of *Wild Fermentation*, visiting with us at South River Miso.

By eating a variety of live fermented foods, you promote diversity among microbial cultures in your body... By fermenting foods and drinks with wild microorganisms present in your home environment, you become more interconnected with the life forces of the world around you.

ACTIVE CULTURES AND CULTURAL ACTIVISM

*Social change is another form of fermentation. ... The word "ferment" derives from the Latin *fervere*, "to boil." ... Fermenting liquids bubble just like boiling liquids. Excited people can channel the same intensity, and use it to create change.*

Though fermentation is a phenomenon of transformation, the change it renders tends to be gentle, slow, and steady.

... Use your fermented goodies to nourish your family and friends... The life-affirming power of these basic foods contrasts sharply with the lifeless, industrially processed foods that fill supermarket shelves. Draw inspiration from the action of bacteria and yeast, and make your life a transformative process.

The Charoti people of South America view the time of fermentation as 'the birth of the good spirit'

Not only are we dependent on microorganisms, we are their descendents: According to the fossil record, all forms of life on Earth spring from bacterial origins. Microorganisms are our ancestors and our allies.



South River Miso selected as "Authentic Food Artisan"

Whole Foods Market has recently recognized South River Miso as an "Authentic Food Artisan" (AFA).

"Our buyers search the world over, selecting the choice few producers who exemplify commitment to excellence and all-encompassing attention to detail..."

"Many of the world's best producers of organic food and wine are small family-run enterprises. These individuals are more artists than business people, motivated by a deep passion for their craft to make food in small quantities, according to traditional methods..."

—From the Whole Foods Market AFA poster

Cooking for Life with South River Miso

South River Porridge

“Porridge is the mother of us all”

—Russian proverb

- 1 cup rolled oats
- 2 cups water
- 2 teaspoons one-year light miso* (see note below)

OVERNIGHT METHOD: Cook oatmeal in the evening 5-10 minutes, or until water is absorbed. (Do not use salt in the cooking.) Let oatmeal cool down to body temperature and then stir miso thoroughly into the warm cereal. Cover and let sit overnight at room temperature (about 70°).

Without imparting a noticeable taste of its own, the miso with its enzymatic power, will liquefy the cereal, unlocking its essential nutrition as it ferments overnight. The cereal will turn into a liquid gruel with a wholesome sweet or mildly sour taste. Reheat in the morning (without boiling) and serve.

MORNING “ON-THE-GO” METHOD: Prepare oatmeal as above. Stir miso into a bowl of medium hot oatmeal. Let sit several minutes before eating.

—Any whole, rolled, cracked, or ground cereal grains may be used, although cooking times will vary as necessary.

—Add mulberries or other dried or fresh fruits and/or nuts as you cook the cereal or as you stir in the miso.



Autumn Simplicity

One evening in September, after a day of not feeling well, I made some soup. It was as if I had discovered miso for the first time! I quickly felt energized and enjoyed a peaceful evening and a restful sleep.

- 2 cups finely chopped fall greens (I used kale from our garden)
- 3 cups water
- 1 tablespoon 3-year dark miso (I used Dandelion-Leek)
- 1 tablespoon 1-year light miso
- 1 teaspoon nutritional yeast (optional)

Add greens to cold water and bring to a boil. Simmer covered on medium heat for 10-12 minutes. Turn heat to low. Add miso and nutritional yeast (optional).

Simple, healing, and delicious! —Gaella

Creamy Cultured Oat Milk

- 1 cup rolled oats
- 3 cups water
- 2 teaspoons one-year light miso* (see note below)

Follow the “overnight method” for porridge. In the morning use a blender to transform the liquid porridge into smooth milk. Strain if desired, heat and serve. Delicious with a touch of ginger!



*Note: For these recipes it is imperative to use an unpasteurized, one-year light miso, rich in amylase enzymes. (Choose South River Chick Pea, Sweet Tasting Brown Rice, Azuki Bean, Sweet White, or Garlic Red Pepper Miso.)

Frequently Asked Questions about Miso

How long does miso keep? I’ve had a jar in my refrigerator for about a year. Is it still OK to use?

Because of its salt content, miso will keep for years under refrigeration. It is fine to use miso that has been in the fridge for a year or more.

I have heard it is best not to cook miso; if so, how do I make miso soup?

Each teaspoonful of unpasteurized miso contains millions of active microorganisms which are beneficial to the dynamic digestion and assimilation of all foods, and which help to establish and maintain a healthy, vigorous digestive system. For these reasons, miso should not be subjected to prolonged cooking or high heat. Add miso at the end of cooking and turn the heat source down very low or remove soup from the stove and serve several minutes later, allowing the flavors to blend.

How much miso should I use?

For greatest benefit miso should be used in small amounts on a regular basis. One to two tablespoons per day would be average use. When seasoning soup, begin by adding a small amount of miso — one to two teaspoons per cup of liquid — adding more if needed. Miso soup should taste neither too salty nor too bland. The miso should mingle with the flavor of the soup and enhance, but not overpower it.



Thoughts on Breakfast Porridge

“Nothing is better for gently waking up your digestive tract and energizing you for the day ahead than porridge. In its many guises, it is the ultimate breakfast food.”

—Sandor Katz

“Our ancestors and virtually all pre-industrialized peoples soaked or fermented their grains before making them into porridge, breads, cakes, and casseroles.”

—Sally Fallon





Two new faces at South River: Michael Suter and German Perico.



...thanks for preserving some of the wonder of creation for us in your miso. It is an oasis in a world gone mad with materialism and profit. It is so nice to see a business able to thrive by doing what is right to do, by using quality methods and materials. May it continue for the benefit of all!

M.M., DAVENPORT, WA

Opening a fresh jar of your 3-Year Barley miso and inhaling its wonderful aroma is one of the great pleasures of life... we love the 3-Year Barley so much that we can eat it three days in a row and still crave it!

M.L., NEWBURY PARK, CA

Thank you for your tremendous tour and explanation of your shining operation! ...the students came back to the Kushi Institute and inspired everyone with their explanations... particularly the manner in which you both take such loving care in a spirit-filled way to make the best miso you can.... Some classified the tour as a "religious experience!"

JANE ZEIMANTZ,
FORMER MACROBIOTIC CAREER TRAINING MANAGER,
KUSHI INSTITUTE,
BECKET, MA

We got our tamari and it is amazing!

J. D., NATURAL EPICUREAN SCHOOL OF COOKING,
AUSTIN, TX



Winter at South River Farm

Love Letters

...how savory, smooth, and pure your Dandelion Leek Miso.... One cannot describe how precious this food is.... Simply Wonderful!

R.C., WAYLAND, MA

I have been eating miso for 30 years or more and I have just stumbled upon yours and it's far and away the best around.... As good as any and better than most, even what I had in Japan.

DR. L.R., CAMBRIDGE, MA

Today is Valentine's Day and I couldn't have asked for anything better than to receive my order from South River. I stopped everything and quickly fixed a bowl of soup - I was so curious to see what the difference might be between naturally fermented and aged miso and that other stuff I've been getting. Fairest assessment: no comparison.

B.U. DENVER, CO.

www.southernrivermiso.com

SOUTH RIVER FARM | CONWAY, MASS. 01341

WOOD-FIRED HANDMADE MISO SINCE 1979

Certified Organic & Unpasteurized

SOUTH RIVER
MISO COMPANY

South River Farm, October 2004.

"Miso is a uniquely grounding food... The comfort and healing that Jewish grandmothers have proverbially offered in the form of chicken soup, I have more often found in miso soup. No food I know is more soothing."
—Sandor Katz

