

# Finding Inspiration (and Profit) in Maine's Living Heritage:

## New Entrepreneurs Drawing upon the Past

by Kreg Ettenger

### Abstract

Maine has a rich heritage of traditional arts and industries that derive from its Indigenous and settler populations and the ways its people have used its natural resources and adapted to its diverse environments. This heritage continues today in a variety of forms, from economic activities like resource harvesting to artistic expressions such as music, dance, storytelling, and the visual arts. This essay looks at how traditional or folk activities, including foods, beverages, and other artisanal industries, continue to play an important role in Maine's economic, social, and cultural landscape. Far from being quaint traditions maintained for cultural reasons, they are an important part of Maine's new economy, helping to define its future through connections with its past.

### INTRODUCTION

Everything old is new again. What goes around comes around. The more things change, the more they stay the same. Take your pick of adages, but the idea that the past informs our present, and provides a guide for the future, is ingrained in our thinking. Of course, we all understand this idea in a general, philosophical way, but it is also true in a tangible, material way. Even as we live our lives in the modern world, we still draw upon the past to make practical decisions about things, from when to plant our vegetables to how we decorate our homes. At the same time, the more we are driven by things like technology and media, and feel a sense of disorientation and anxiety as a result, the greater our desire to return to a simpler time, some nostalgic past when our lives were guided by the seasons and by nature and when things like family and community were essential building blocks of society.

As we look back on the past 200 years of Maine history, it is worth noting that, as William Faulkner (1951) pointed out, "The past is never dead. It's not even past." This is nowhere more true than in the case of what might be called folk traditions, those activities around home,

work, and social life that inform and guide our actions as we live our daily lives. Despite the many changes over the past two centuries, some of the traditions that developed and flourished in Maine continue today. In fact, some are thriving because of a new generation that wishes to return to traditional occupations and a more authentic way of life. In this essay, I look at just a few such activities, representing a small slice of contemporary Maine life. Examples include the use of traditional practices such as horses in farming and logging, the resurgence of interest in heirloom crops, and the incorporation of traditional ingredients in Maine's food and beverage industry.

As more Maine residents (and visitors) seek healthy, sustainable, and balanced lifestyles and occupations, there is much to learn from the old ways of doing things. There is also an abundance of economic opportunity for those able to draw upon the past to create products that appeal to modern tastes and values, as the examples I draw upon will show. In some cases, the connection to Maine's past has led to the flourishing of creative small businesses in multiple sectors throughout the state.

How we measure the impact of folk traditions in Maine depends on how we define them. If we use narrow terms and only include activities that have changed little since their first use, then the results will be modest. If we cast a broader net, defining folk traditions as inspired by traditional activities, representing some aspect of regional culture, or reliant on traditional resources and materials, then we will find a wider set of examples with much greater impacts. That is not to say that all things cultural are folk. Just because people made beer and cider in the past doesn't mean that every bar in Portland's Old Port should be classified as a purveyor of traditional beverages. So, I do draw



*Team of horses and teamsters Bill Palmer (seated), Dennis Robar (checked cap), and a third man, at a temporary log yard at Elmer Byrson's job on Sodel Brook. Horses were once essential to the logging industry; today they are used by a small but growing number of low-impact loggers in Maine.*

Source: Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History, P05828. Unknown photographer, c. 1914. Courtesy Maine Folklife Center and Fogler Library Special Collections, University of Maine.

some lines, focusing on activities that show a clear lineage with the past and specifically the past in Maine. I also focus on living activities, i.e., things that are still being done today and not just historical representations of the past. Some of the lines are admittedly subjective. Should the haute cuisine of restaurants that use locally sourced and foraged Maine ingredients be considered as part of Maine's folk tradition, or something else entirely? I do include some of those examples herein, but others may disagree.

In the interest of space, I focus on just a few areas: logging, farming, cuisine, and craft beverages. In each of these areas, there are contemporary examples of Maine's heritage being explored and applied in new and creative ways, showing that this is a living heritage with modern practitioners inspired by and drawing from the past while responding to new economic opportunities. This behavior is an example of the folk tradition, which has always drawn upon past forms and objects to create new things that meet the needs of their current users (Vlach 1980). While in the past, those needs were often immediate—a warm quilt, a sturdy basket, or food for survival—today these needs are

often related to the tourism economy, the art market, furniture making, and fine dining. But that does not mean these functions are not important to the makers, or that they do not play a role in preserving folk traditions for current and future generations.

### HORSE LOGGING: SOMETIMES THE OLD WAYS ARE BETTER

The Maine Folklife Center has long been associated with Maine's traditional occupations, especially the lumber industry. In fact, it was logging camps and cultures that first piqued the interest of Edward "Sandy" Ives, the center's founder in the late 1950s and early 1960s. His research on traditional logging methods included river drives as well as the use of horses, oxen, and early power equipment (including chainsaws) in the woods. Later studies by Ives and others at the Folklife Center have looked at many other occupations, from fishing and crabbing to blueberry harvesting and working in canneries and mills.

Today, some Mainers are returning to traditional methods in their quest for more sustainable alternatives, whether in the fields or the forests. One of these traditions is the use of horses for pulling logs out of the woods, something that early Maine loggers used extensively, and without which the state's lumber industry could likely not have existed. Horses were used in tandem with the rivers to get logs from inland harvesting areas to downriver mills, where they were used for lumber or paper products. Horses were largely displaced in the early part of the twentieth century, at a time when mechanized equipment was taking over in both the woods and the fields. Since then they have been relegated to a marginal role, often used only for competitive pulling or for the occasional photo opportunity, county fair, or special event. Until now, that is.

While numbers are difficult to come by, a *Bangor Daily News* article suggested that there were about two dozen horse-powered logging operators as of a decade ago (Mack 2009). For those operators, the low impact of horses on woodlots and with the modest startup and maintenance costs compared to mechanical skidders are clear advantages. This is a trend across the country, especially for

small woodlot owners, according to *Mother Earth News* (Moates 2006). Other advantages to horse logging include that animals are quieter and less prone to breakdown than machines, do less damage to the woods (including less compacting of soils), allow for logging of steep hillsides and other hard-to-reach places, and are better for selective cutting practices. They don't create wide skid trails or chew up soil, plants, and tree roots, and they allow the landowner to preserve small trees that in time will grow to harvestable size. As Healing Harvest Forest Foundation President Jason Rutledge put it, "horses are the ultimate low-impact overland extraction technique available, period" (Moates 2006). And they are also "self-repairing" and "self-replacing," according to North Carolina logger Ian Snider (Randel 2011).

Of course, horses are not for everyone. As former horse logger John Anderson put it, "once you get anything hydraulic...you understand why people don't horse-log anymore" (Bellerose 2018). The operations that tend to be profitable are smaller and focus on niche markets, such as landowners with small lots who want to protect wildlife habitat or clear a house site and use their logged wood for construction. As every horse logger points out, the hours are long, the work is hard, and profit margins are slim. That's why modern horse logging remains "more of an avocation than a vocation," according to Anderson. The number of horse logging operations in Maine remains small, and in terms of their relative contribution to Maine's forest economy, they are but a tiny fraction. Still, for those looking for a more sustainable way to manage their own forests or other woodlands, horses remain a viable option, and the knowledge of this traditional practice, often passed from person to person, is worth preserving. As Ian Snider, a logger and biological woodsman from Boone, North Carolina, puts it, "It is about going forward with a nod to the past" (Randel 2011).

### LOST LOGS AND NEWFOUND BEAUTY

While some Mainers are returning to heritage logging practices, others are literally reclaiming the state's logging history. Two different Maine companies formed in the past decade to recover submerged logs from early logging

operations, now resting on the bottom of the state's lakes and rivers. These sinker logs, or deadheads, were part of river drives that took place from the early nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth century, when they were replaced with roads and trains as a way of moving felled trees to Maine's sawmills and paper mills. (Sandy Ives's [1977] book on Maine log drives, *Argyle Boom*, was based on interviews with dozens of former loggers and describes their techniques in detail.) Most of the logs that sank during the drives were old growth hardwoods, including maple, oak, and birch. Too heavy to float, they were sometimes tied to rafts of softwood logs that were sent downriver. Some sinkers never made their destinations, and it is estimated that millions of them line the deep waters of rivers and lakes across the state, preserved over a century in a waterlogged, but largely intact, form by cold, anaerobic conditions.

Early operations to salvage some of these deadheads began in the 1950s, but the process was difficult and expensive and turned out to be unprofitable (Cayford and Scott 1964). A half a century later, two Maine-owned companies, Deadhead Lumber and Maine Heritage



*Thousands of logs await removal from the Penobscot River at the Argyle Boom, one of more than a dozen operations near Bangor where log drives ended and marked logs were separated by ownership before being transported to area mills. Many logs did not complete the journey and are resting on river and lake bottoms, where they are a resource for a new breed of "salvage loggers."*

Source: Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History, P00703. Unknown photographer, c. 1900. Courtesy of Maine Folklife Center and Fogler Library Special Collections, University of Maine.



Timber, began to recover some of these logs using modern equipment including sonar and hydraulic grappling hooks. The companies lifted logs, some from trees that were centuries old when cut, from lake and river bottoms and learned to mill and dry them in a way that protected their structure and beauty. They also found a market for the lumber among hardwood floor installers, furniture makers, and others interested in the unique qualities of this wood, including the density and tight grain of the old-growth trees and the variety of colors resulting from years in a waterlogged state.

Even more attractive to some people was the story behind the wood, particularly its origins in Maine's primeval forests and its connection with the state's legendary logging industry. Knowing that the wood in your floor, your kitchen island, or the counter at your local bar came from a giant tree felled by axe or bucksaw by men in woolen clothes and pulled to the water's edge by teams of horses or oxen is an impressive thing. The wood's pedigree is increased further by the fact that the tree, before it was felled, could have provided shade for a shore lunch eaten by Henry David Thoreau, Benedict Arnold, or a nineteenth-century hunting party led by Penobscot guides. This kind of living history appeals to many modern Mainers and others for whom the experience of a place or an object is tied directly to its origins and the story behind it.

While Deadhead Lumber appears to be defunct as of mid-2020, Maine Timber Heritage has grown to employ some 25 people in the town of Millinocket, an area hard-hit by pulpwood mill closures in recent years. It has morphed from timber salvage and lumber sales to furniture and woodcraft production using its reclaimed wood and to production of a small range of decorative products such as wainscoting and wall veneer, much of which ends up in Maine's high-end restaurants and other visible locations.<sup>1</sup> The company's changing focus suggests that the real value of timber salvaged from Maine's waters is in finished products, not the resource itself—probably due to the high cost of the raw material, which can be 10 or 20 times the cost of standard lumber. Maine Timber Heritage markets their own line of kitchen accessories such as cheese boards and trays, all carrying the following message emblazoned on them:

This product was made from a hardwood tree that grew along the banks of the West Branch of the Penobscot River in the wilderness of northern Maine. This tree was

felled with an axe in 1899 and laid submerged for more than a century. It was a forgotten artifact of Maine's rich logging history...until now.

Clearly the history of the wood is a critical element of these products. While river drives and logging camps full of rough and rowdy men might be a thing of the past, the allure of this way of life still draws people to Maine, and to Maine products.

## HERITAGE FARMING PRACTICES

Maine farmers are another group turning to the past for inspiration, technology, and other forms of living heritage. One trend is the small but growing number of farmers, many of them younger and college-educated, who are using draft horses for plowing and other activities. As with horse logging, draft horses provide a quieter, more environmentally friendly, and less capital-intensive way to harvest the land. It's not just sustainability that many of these farmers are seeking, however, but a closer relationship to the land and to animals, that hearkens back to a simpler time. As farmer Richard Lee of Tender Soles Farm puts it, "We work with draft animals because we like to smell, hear, see and feel the environment under our feet at a human pace" (Lee 2017).

Horse farming takes a special breed of person as well as horse, and the number of modern practitioners remains small. No statistics are available, but evidence suggests that the number of farms in Maine that employ working horses is in the dozens, out of some 8,000 total farms (Pols 2016). Still, it is an attractive option for some, many of whom are younger farmers just entering the field (Lee 2017) and reflects a national trend, especially among farmers interested in organic, sustainable, low-input, natural farming methods. In Maine, this group includes some college-educated farmers who are taking over family farms, or starting their own, using more sustainable methods including draft animals. One example is Goranson Farm in Dresden, where farmer Carl Johanson rejoined his parents after graduating from Bennington College, where he studied agroecology. Johanson introduced draft horses to the farm and now uses them to cultivate certain high-value crops. They have not replaced the farm's tractors, but they do provide an alternative way to work the land that matches Johanson's values and goals of creating a more sustainable food system (Pols 2016).



*A team of horses hauling a loaded wagon on a farm in Lincoln County around 1900. This scene would have been common at the time. Today some farmers are returning to horses as a means of draft power on their farms.*

Source: Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History, P02055. Unknown photographer, Lincoln County, c. 1880–1900. Courtesy of Maine Folklife Center and Fogler Library Special Collections, University of Maine.

Draft animals are but one way that farmers are incorporating folk knowledge into their resource management practices. Other methods include using heritage equipment, including handmade plows and other items, and growing heritage food crops (Poppick 2020). The latter practice has become mainstream, with many companies now offering a wide variety of heirloom seeds, seedlings, and plants. Johnny's Selected Seeds, one of Maine's two large independent seed producers and distributors, offers hundreds of varieties of heirloom vegetables, fruits, berries, grains, and other crops. Fedco Seeds, the other large company, similarly offers a wide range of heirloom seeds. Both companies have expanded their range of heirloom crops in recent years in response to a growing demand for varieties that are well-suited to regional growing conditions, contain more flavor and other qualities than most commercial varieties, and appeal to home gardeners and to farmers growing for CSAs (community-supported agriculture) and local markets. Many heirloom varieties do require more careful growing and harvesting practices, but organic growers welcome this tradeoff for a product that can fetch a premium price with discriminating customers including some top restaurateurs.

The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) has played a large role in promoting the preservation and propagation of heirloom varieties. Their annual harvest festival, the Common Ground Fair, provides a showcase for many heirloom crops, as well as heirloom breeds of livestock. They also recently established the Maine Heritage Orchard, where over 300 heirloom varieties of apples and pears are raised in a former gravel pit near Unity.<sup>2</sup> Many of the varieties grown actually had their origins in Maine and have been rescued from farms and former orchards throughout the state. Some growers are now producing these heirloom varieties, many of which were grown for specific purposes such as cider, and are creating products for Maine's burgeoning artisanal food and beverage industry. Several Maine cideries have begun to incorporate heirloom varieties, as well as apples foraged from wild trees and defunct orchards, into their products, as I describe in the next section.

### FOLK TO FORK: MAINE'S NEW CULINARY TRENDS

Maine's folk heritage has helped inspire a movement of restaurateurs, brewers, and other food and beverage entrepreneurs who look to the past, as well as to the Maine landscape, for ingredients, recipes, and food preservation techniques. This includes some of Maine's top restaurants, such as Hugo's, Vinland, and the Lost Kitchen, all of which are using Maine ingredients and traditionally inspired dishes to attract customers and appeal to modern tastes. Award-winning chefs, such as David Turin, Erin French, Mike Wiley, and Andrew Taylor, are creating food using ingredients that would have been familiar to early settlers, prepared in ways that reflect modern American and continental cuisines. And they are using the heritage and local sources of their foods as a distinct marketing strategy. Hugo's, for example, says that most of its ingredients are "farmed, fished and foraged" in Maine, and states that the restaurant "marks the division between the old and new, embracing tradition and pursuing innovation."<sup>3</sup> Menu items at Maine's finer restaurants now include things like blistered fiddleheads with crisp lotus chips and black

sesame beurre blanc (The Fiddlehead, Bangor); smoked mussels and salt cod brandade (Hugo's, Portland); and lobster tostada with avocado hummus, hominy, and salsa verde (Earth at Hidden Pond, Kennebunkport). Clearly Maine's chefs are drawing on local ingredients and historical recipes for inspiration, while adding their own twists.

Maine beverages have also taken a decidedly historical turn. The microbrewery craze was the first to incorporate traditional and heritage ingredients, such as vintage and locally grown hops, to add distinctiveness and regional flavor. Eventually a rash of distilleries, meaderies, wineries, and cideries got in on the act, drawing heavily on traditional recipes, techniques, ingredients, and even equipment to add a historical and regional flair to their products (Sanders 2012). Many of these businesses use ingredients sourced from local farmers and other producers; some, such as Norway Brewing Company, use these exclusively (Kish 2016). According to Josh Christie, the current state of Maine's spirit industry hearkens back to its hard-living past, when loggers, fishermen, and farmers (and their families) drank ale and cider instead of water, and grocers served rum punch out of tubs (Christie 2013). This behavior changed in the mid-nineteenth century with the passage of the "Maine Law," one of the nation's first temperance laws, although it also led to the creation of the first microbreweries—in basements, warehouses and fraternity houses across the state.

The economic impact of Maine's breweries is considerable: according to the Maine Brewers Guild, as of 2018 there were over 130 breweries in Maine, up from around 20 in 2007. Collectively they sold more than \$168 million worth of beer in 2018, contributing over \$260 million to the state's economy (Crawley 2018). And while the explosive growth of this industry cannot be entirely attributed to its connection with Maine's folk traditions—it's part of a national trend—brewers in Maine have clearly capitalized on Maine's heritage in everything from their names and the names of their products to where they are located (former mills, for example), to their décor and marketing strategies. And of course, there are the ingredients, ranging from heirloom hops to flavorings provided by wild Maine blueberries, raspberries, and even lobster (Fuhrmeister 2015).

### THE CIDER REVOLUTION

Perhaps nowhere is the turn to heritage more visible than in Maine's rapidly growing hard cider industry.



*A man and woman stand next to an apple tree during harvest time in Lincoln County in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. The dark color of the fruit suggests a resemblance to "Putnam Purple," an heirloom variety that originated on Mount Desert Island—one of numerous types of Maine apples and pears collected by MOFGA to grow in its Maine Heritage Orchard.*

Source: Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History, P02027. Unknown photographer, c. 1880–1910. Courtesy of Maine Folklife Center and Fogler Library Special Collections, University of Maine.

Long playing second fiddle to Maine's craft breweries, the number of cideries in the state is on the rise, and they offer a wide range of high-quality products (Goat 2019). Mainers have long had a taste for hard cider; in past generations, it was something many people made and drank at home, including during the dry Maine Law era in the late 1800s and during federal prohibition (Christie 2013). Its modern resurgence has come as craft brewers decided to branch out, or as new entrepreneurs searched for a



beverage market that wasn't already saturated. In the past 10 years some 18 cideries have been founded in the state—still a fraction of the number of breweries, but as consumer demand grows, this number is sure to rise. There are also new cider bars in Portland and Belfast, which serve Maine and New England ciders among their selections.

Many cider-makers are turning to regional apple varieties to make their products, suggesting a place-based identity that some are comparing to the Napa Valley wine industry (Goad 2019). Maine cideries are using not only heirloom varieties, but varieties that were bred in Maine, and even apples foraged from roadside trees and abandoned cider orchards. Rocky Ground Cider in Newburgh, for example, emphasizes foraged, windfall apples from wild or abandoned trees in their products (Lookner n.d.). Maine cider-makers use the word *terroir* liberally; they are truly trying to create products that have a regional and even local flavor. And they continue to seek out old varieties, many of which are native to Maine and found only in old Maine farms and orchards, for their products (Figure 4). As one author put it, “that is at the heart of the cider quest: combining old knowledge with new discoveries, or as the case may be, rediscoveries” (Baker 2017). Maine was once a leading producer of cider apples and hard cider, and if current trends continue, the state may regain at least a share of this title.

The new cider-makers are also looking to connect with Maine's exploding culinary tourism industry and farm-to-fork movement, whether that is by opening farm-based tasting rooms where meals are also served or getting their ciders served at many of Maine's top restaurants. One grower, David Buchanan of Porterfield Cider of Pownal, says that cider, with its near-infinite variety of apple and yeast combinations leading to many different flavors, is a natural complement to local foods. “If you love Maine food, this is your native drink” (Baker 2017). Just as underwater loggers tapped into Maine's lumbering heritage to attract consumers through a connection with place and history, Maine's cider-makers are doing more than making an alcoholic beverage: they are trying to connect place,



*A family harvests apples in Lincoln County, Maine, at the turn of the last century. Every Maine farm would have had apple and other fruit trees, and at one time nearly one in ten had a cider mill. While countless varieties of apples have been lost, many have been collected and preserved, and some are being used by a new crop of cider-makers.*

Source: Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History, P02025. Photographer unknown, c. 1880–1900. Courtesy of the Maine Folklife Center and Fogler Library Special Collections, University of Maine.

product, and consumer in new ways. Khris Hogg, the owner of one of the new cider bars in the state, put it this way: “I think we are tapping into a cultural memory that exists in New England with cider and that has been gone for the better part of a century” (Goad 2019). This suggests that *terroir*, for many Maine growers and producers, is not just about how soil and climate affect a product's taste. It is also about how a region's cultural heritage manifests itself in the things that we grow, eat, drink, and use in our lives. It is about how the human touch of countless generations has created something unique and special, something that only Maine can produce, and that is perhaps best experienced while here.

## CONCLUSIONS

For this special issue of *Maine Policy Review* reflecting on Maine at 200, I wanted to provide an overview and a few examples of how Maine's folk traditions are being used in new ways as part of the state's current transition

from a resource-based economy to one driven largely by tourists and residents seeking new cultural and culinary experiences. The innovators I have described are finding new opportunities to draw upon Maine's storied past and living heritage. They have found niches that capitalize on specific aspects of Maine's heritage, from farming and lumbering to its culinary and beverage traditions. They are exploiting these traditions in new ways, creating products and practices that appeal to a growing number of consumers, many of whom are seeking alternatives to cookie-cutter products and fast-paced ways of life that, especially at this moment in history, seem unhealthy and undesirable.

Some purists might argue that such uses are not really traditional, nor are they folk the way it is usually defined, as oral or material traditions passed on within communities and often within families from generation to generation. We have long since passed the point, however, where this is the primary means by which traditional practices are learned, or how they are practiced, in Maine or elsewhere in the United States. The horse is very much out of that barn. In the postfolk era, one is more likely to learn about a traditional craft, food, musical style, or farming practice online than on a front porch. I would guess that most of the chefs using traditional Maine ingredients in their restaurant cuisine learned how to do so through the internet, other chefs, or simply by applying their existing food knowledge to new ingredients. I doubt that many learned to do so by watching their own grandmothers or uncles prepare the food in this way. And I don't have a problem with that, even if it means that, for many of us, families are no longer the center of our social and economic lives. It also means that people are finding new ways to preserve traditions and pass on vital knowledge, which is critically important.

Some newer Maine communities are playing an increasingly important role in passing on traditional practices and are adding their own to the mix. This includes religious groups like the Mennonites and the Amish, both of whom have established communities in several areas of the state and are helpful sources of information, tools, and even animals for their new neighbors. Several Maine horse farmers and loggers noted that they purchased draft horses or equipment from their new neighbors or sought them out for advice and information. Another important injection of traditional farming knowledge in recent years has

come from New Mainers, including many recent African immigrants and refugees (Fouriez 2017; Slattery 2014). This includes some 1,500 Somali Bantu refugees who have relocated to Lewiston and with community support have begun farming and selling produce and other crops through CSAs and farmers markets.<sup>4</sup> In addition to their general knowledge of farming, especially low-impact methods, these residents are bringing new crops and other traditional knowledge from their home regions and adapting them to Maine farms (McCandlish 2013). Along with several younger farmers entering the agricultural workforce, New Mainers and religious communities like the Amish represent the best hope for not only holding on to important farming traditions, but also for keeping Maine going as an agricultural state (Curtis 2019; Yaffe 2020). Their combinations of traditional practices and innovations may prove critical in the years to come as Maine responds to an aging farming population, increasing pressure on farmland for development, and threats such as climate change and weather extremes.

Institutions like the Grange and Cooperative Extension have also long played an important role in protecting and sharing traditional knowledge, which at one time was cutting-edge science, and such organizations remain critical today. In many cases where a traditional practice is learned firsthand from an experienced mentor, it is likely that this connection was made through an organization such as MOFGA or the Maine Draft Horse & Ox Association. Countless classes, workshops, and other types of training throughout the state teach traditional practices, from canning and pickling to organic gardening, livestock raising, and beekeeping. And much of what is being learned and applied by the new generation of restaurateurs, brewers, farmers, and other entrepreneurs is likely being learned on the fly as they try new things, pick up a bit of knowledge, and take chances. There is a willingness to take risks in this innovation-driven economy that previous generations would not have been able to dare, or afford, to take, in part because our modern makers are often rewarded for inventiveness rather than uniformity. Many younger consumers would rather try a daring flavor of ale at their local microbrewery than chug a six-pack of standard American beer.

What does this say about tradition, which used to be synonymous with consistency? Well, for one thing, it says that tradition is more about the process than the product.



Doing or making things using a traditional technique, equipment, or ingredients is more important to many people than the final outcome. The presumption is that the product will be authentic if the process leading up to it remains true to traditional principles. Variation in taste, appearance, and even quality is to be expected. The industrial age brought us uniformity, which many found boring and bland; the age of postindustrialism and artisanal production is bringing uniqueness, diversity, and even quirkiness. All these things are seen as an antidote to the ills of the past century, when manufacturing and mass production took us away from the natural, human, and animal characteristics of our lived experience, especially our work and its products. Anyone can have a wooden table, but how many can have one with purplish, old-growth oak pulled from the bottom of a Maine river, where it sat for over a century after being felled by an axe and lost during an historic river drive? Or drink a cider made from heirloom apples from an abandoned, centuries-old Maine orchard, now being revitalized by a new crop of cider-makers?

The traditional practices I have described, from horse logging to heirloom crops, local cuisine, and artisanal beverages, are all returns in some ways to a past that connected us with place. They do not draw on this past as a form of reenactment, however, or put it in museums or archives for passive viewing or future research. Rather, they use it to inspire new products and methods, ones that match current tastes and demands and reflect emerging values such as sustainability, resilience, and authenticity. They have a broad appeal, but are especially attractive to those seeking more of a connection with the land, with animals, and with people on a spiritual and emotional level. This includes many visitors to Maine, of course, but also many residents, including New Mainers, in-movers from other states, and young returnees seeking to build strong connections with local communities and landscapes. From a policy perspective, this is just the type of resident that we should hope to attract and who will help create the kind of Maine that will take us through another 200 years. 🐾

## NOTES

- 1 <http://www.maineheritagetimber.com/>
- 2 <https://www.maineheritageorchard.org/>

- 3 <https://www.hugosmaine.com/>
- 4 <https://somalibantumaine.org/>

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