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COMPANY TOWN

Flour City Pasta: Old-fashioned food for the locavore set

By [Zack Seward \(/people/zack-seward\)](#) and [Company Town \(/people/company-town\)](#)



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Jessica Toner and Jon Stadt, the daughter-father owners of Flour City Pasta and Milling Co. Stadt built the company's drying room to simulate "the streets of Italy."

Zack Seward / WXXI

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Ever left a farmers market feeling empty-handed?

You've got a bagful of fresh vegetables, maybe some sustainably-raised meat, but something's still missing: starch.

"There was a huge hole in the farmers markets," says Jessica Toner, one of the owners of the family-run Flour City Pasta and Milling Co. "How do you make a meal at a farmers market? We just thought the best way would be with pasta."

Old-fashioned, slow-dried pasta made out of heritage grains, to be precise.

A slice of the old world

A small room in an old factory building in Fairport is whirring with fans. It's draped in long strips of fettuccine and stacked trays of colorful orzos.

"My dad worked in construction his whole life and he built this dry room for us," explains Toner. "[It's built to] kind of to simulate what it would be like drying in the streets of Italy."

The 85 degree room is a makeshift slice of the Old World just 20 feet from the Erie Canal.

But the man who made it, Jessica's dad Jon Stadt, says the shift from construction to pasta making came, in part, out of necessity.

"When I lost my construction job I went home and told my wife, 'When you get lemons, you gotta make lemon garlic fettuccine'," Stadt says.

After a handful of years distributing pasta made elsewhere, Flour City has been making its own for the last year-and-a-half. Now, the family-run mill pumps out about 1,000 pounds of pasta per week, selling at farmers markets and restaurants across the state.

The goal: "Utilizing heritage foods, heritage grains and really getting back to the roots of our local foods," says Toner. "But elevating it a bit."

Passion for pasta

Flour City makes over 50 different kinds of pastas. Stadt and another employee handle the pasta making, while Toner's husband does the milling. Her mom also helps run the company and Toner's twin toddlers serve as chief taste testers.

"We try to be really creative," says Toner. "Whatever our pasta makers feel like making that day."

So far it seems to be working.

Toner says the local foods movement in Rochester has been especially supportive of the family's pasta business. So much so, that Flour City recently started milling heritage grains for baking.

Stadt, who attributes his love of pasta to growing up with lots of Italian friends in and around East Rochester, says the job isn't always glamorous.

But he says making old-fashioned, locally-sourced pasta with the people he loves is more than worth it.

"It's a lot of hours and it's a labor of love," says Stadt. "But it's great to have a family business and have the whole family involved - and to take it out there and see the happy faces of people after they try the pasta."

Try it yourself

Flour City Pasta always has seasonally-appropriate recipes on hand for when they're selling at farmers markets. Here's a simple recipe they gave us that you can try at home. Bon appétit!

Caramelized Onions and Local Goat Cheese over Sweet Potato Thyme Pasta

Ingredients:

- 1 lb Flour City Sweet Potato Thyme Pasta

- 4 Large sweet onions - sliced into half-moon shapes
- 1-2 T. Olive oil
- 1 T. Butter
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 8-ounce container of First Light Farm and Creamery Chevre (available at local natural foods stores and farmers markets)
- 1 bunch of fresh thyme

Directions:

1. Heat a cast iron skillet to medium. Add 1-2 tablespoons of olive oil and 1 tablespoon of butter. Add chopped onions and cook over medium to low heat until onions are caramelized and deep golden brown, but not burned.
2. While the onions are cooking - boil water for pasta. Cook pasta in boiling water for 6-8 minutes and drain.
3. When onions are completely caramelized - turn off the heat and add the chevre to the pan until loosened and combined with onions. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
4. Plate pasta - top with goat cheese and carmelized onions. Garnish with fresh thyme.

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