

OUTSIDE THE KITCHEN

Chef: *Alexa Wilkinson*

Residence: *Ossining*

Restaurant: *The Tapp, Tarrytown*



Chef Speak

“I don’t need to be famous, don’t need to be on TV, don’t want a penthouse in New York. I want a wonderful restaurant that is profitable, where everyone makes money, is happy and respectful.”

It’s an ageless story: Young musicians lured to New York City by possibility, fueled by hope and ramen, stumbling home from dive-bar gig to basement rental, bank account and dream tottering to defeat. Alexa Wilkinson wasn’t one of them. After eight years, she shelved that dream for another—the stove instead of the microphone—and found purpose and profit.

“It got harder and harder to be a musician and justify spending money on tour, driving eight-, nine-hour stretches in the middle of the night. It got to the point where I felt so bruised and broken, didn’t feel the passion anymore.” She explored web design and merchandising at Parsons The New School for Design, earning an associate’s degree in graphic design (“I thought trying to do something artsy would inspire me as a musician”), while making extra money bartending and cooking burgers in bars and restaurants. “I realized I cared more about coming to work at a beer bar than I did going on my next tour,” she says. Her father suggested culinary school, and “it all came together for me.” She signed up at midtown Manhattan’s Institute of Culinary Education and never looked back. In 2012, a graduate in both culinary arts and management, she returned to the Tarrytown martini bar Brute on 9, where she had served her ICE externship, armed with her degrees and a proposition: “I knew we could do better; I told them I can come in here and make amazing food with this baby kitchen, and we can make a lot of money,” she says, her eyes and voice spilling surety. “And they said, ‘Okay, we’re giving you a shot.’”

How is this girl just 27? Hardened, wise, indomitable, she led the bar’s transformation into The Tapp, a meteoric culinary and craft-beer success.



Greek antipasto salad with lemon tzatziki dressing, Gaeta olive, prosciutto, grilled lemon, feta, sun-dried tomatoes, and shallots.

alize who I am as a person. I don’t need to be famous, don’t need to be on TV, don’t want a penthouse in New York. I want a wonderful restaurant that is profitable, where everyone makes money, is happy and respectful. I wouldn’t have learned any of that if I hadn’t gone through these hurdles.” Seems the subject for a great song, which, being the indefatigable striver she is, it surely will be: Her few days off are spent in the recording studio, not in bed.

—Diane Weintraub Pohl

SPICE RACK

Discovering unusual spices and herbs, one jar at a time

[Sweet Cicely]



aka...
seseli, British myrrh, anise chervil, sweet bracken, shepherd’s needle

Flavor Strength



Description: Grown in the garden both as an herb and a flowering perennial, sweet cicely can grow up to 5 feet tall and is most often used in the kitchens of Germans and Scandinavians. The softly textured, fern-like leaves have an anise aroma and a pleasing sugar-like taste.

You Might Like To Know: Finely chopped sweet cicely makes a delicious addition to salads; also, it’s a safe sweetener for diabetics and pairs well with cream and yogurt and in cool summer drinks.

Purported Attribute: According to Botanical.com, ancient herbalists suggested the roots of the sweet cicely plant—when boiled and eaten with oil and vinegar—are “very good for old people that are dull and without courage; it rejoiceth and comforteth the heart and increaseth their lust and strength.” Who needs Viagra?

—JBT

ALEXA WILKINSON PHOTOGRAPHY/KARINA OH

SIZZLING...
Quinoa

HEATING...
Kamut
(an ancient wheat grain native to Egypt)



FIZZLING...
Couscous