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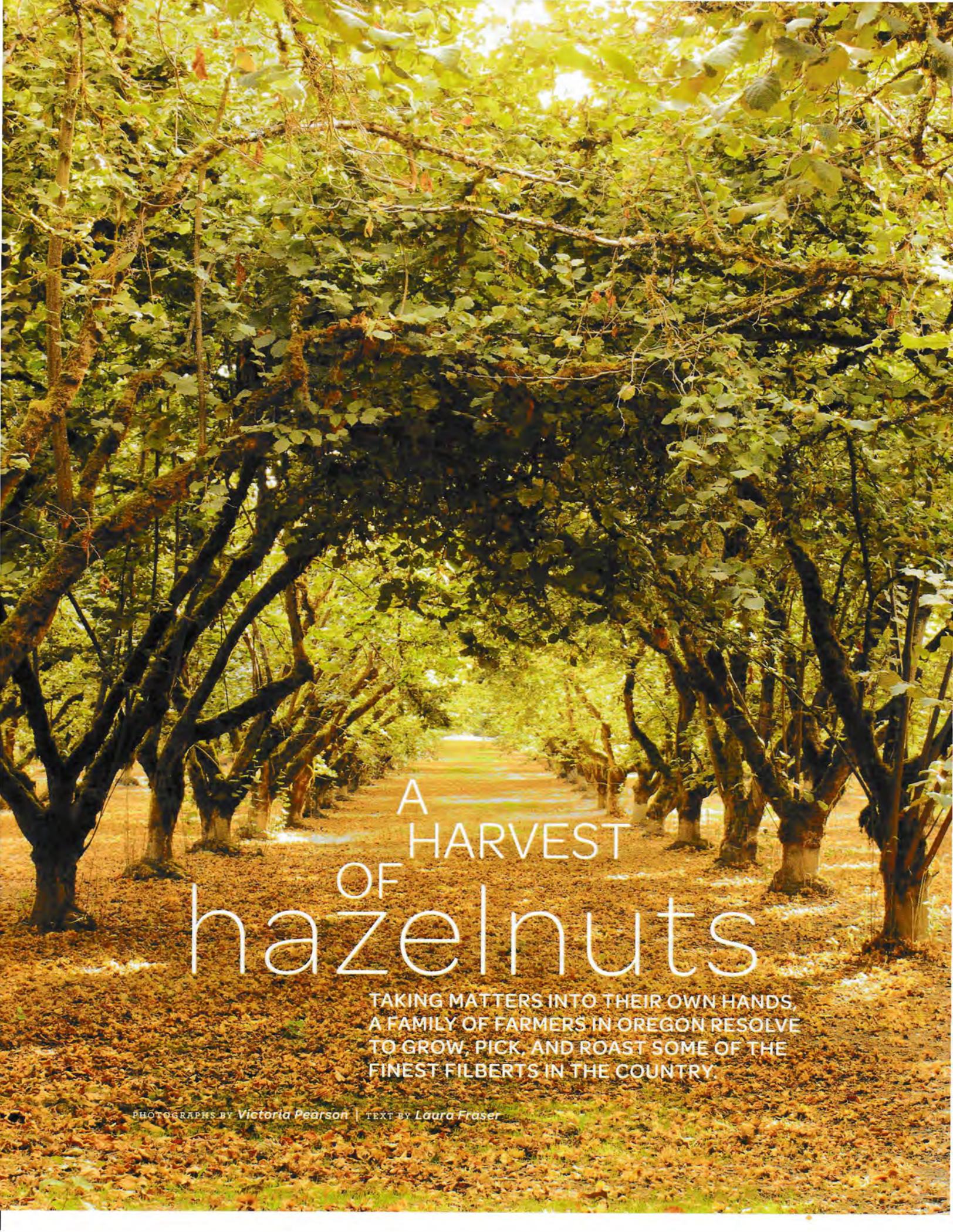
The Martha Stewart Show is now on Hallmark Channel!

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NOT FAR FROM THE TREE

In fall, as the Oregon weather cools, hazelnuts drop off the trees one by one, and then faster, like rain. Once the process starts, it's a rush to harvest the nuts off the ground before storms wet and ruin them.





A
HARVEST
OF
hazelnuts

TAKING MATTERS INTO THEIR OWN HANDS,
A FAMILY OF FARMERS IN OREGON RESOLVE
TO GROW, PICK, AND ROAST SOME OF THE
FINEST FILBERTS IN THE COUNTRY.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY *Victoria Pearson* | TEXT BY *Laura Fraser*

BARB FOULKE HAS SEEN it happen thousands of times: A passerby at the Portland Farmers Market tries a hazelnut sample, keeps on walking, stops in her tracks 10 feet later, and twirls right back around to the Freddy Guys Hazelnuts stall. “They always seem dazed, coming back to buy more,” she says.

While Oregon produces nearly all the hazelnuts in the United States (the Mediterranean climate is favorable to the crop), few taste as fresh, with as delicate a crunch and such nutty, sweet, toasted flavor, as Freddy Guys’s. That’s because Barb, 56, a nurse-practitioner turned farmer, personally handles her hazelnuts from the branch to the market, inspecting quality at every step, fine-tuning the sorting, cracking, and custom roasting. “My customers are just like me,” she says. “They pay attention to detail and appreciate quality.”

Actually, most aren’t quite as picky as Barb, who won’t let even a bag of nuts out of her hands at the market without instructing a customer to keep them in the fridge to last longer. After the annual harvest, she keeps the nuts in cold storage and only takes them out for cracking and shelling as ordered. If a shopper tries to buy nuts for Christmas when it’s only September, she’ll frown and tell her to come back in another couple of months, so they’ll be fresh.

Barb’s first customers—which included some of Portland’s top chefs, such as Vitaly Paley, of Paley’s Place—were finicky, too, and once they discovered her nuts, they kept sending in orders. “In Oregon, hazelnuts are a commodity crop where growers pool them. They get processed in a communal processing facility, and you don’t know where they come from,” Paley says. But Barb controls the chain from tree to table. “Barb grows, picks, shells, and roasts the nuts to my specifications, and in two days they’re on my doorstep,” Paley says. From there, the nuts might be sprinkled on chocolate soufflés or tossed onto grass-fed beef with grilled peaches and arugula.

Barb and her husband, Fritz (nicknamed Freddy, so the rest of the family are “Freddy’s guys”), bought their 60-acre hazelnut orchard in Monmouth, a little more than an hour’s drive from Portland, in 1998. They had been running an Indian Health Service clinic in Washington State, where Fritz was a family practitioner, and wanted to supplement their income to eventually put their three middle-schoolers through college. Barb had grown up on a farm, but she and Fritz had no experience with hazelnuts. “It was appropriate, because we’ve always been a little nutty,” she says. With help from Barb’s nearby uncle, they learned to drive tractors and trim the scraggly hazelnut trees. The kids pitched in, sweeping the tidy orchards so the nuts fell on clean ground. They sold their nuts to big commodity dealers until 2001, when the price of hazelnuts bottomed out. “We were proud of our hazelnuts, and sweated getting them out, but the price didn’t come close to the cost of running our orchard,” Barb says.

At the next harvest, she sold her own. She and her daughter, Jocie, printed labels and pasted them on bags of hazelnuts that they had cracked and sorted by hand to sell at the farmers’ market. The first



year, they made \$500. In eight years, Barb has gone from selling 500 pounds of her nuts to 175,000 pounds annually. The Foulkes have since bought a second orchard and expanded their product line from raw nuts to roasted, salted, spicy, and chocolate-covered nuts, as well as hazelnut pizza dough mix, hazelnut butter, and gianduja (hazelnut-chocolate spread). Along the way, Barb put profits back into the business, finding the finest Italian sorting and roasting machines, and this year, a new press for hazelnut oil.

The hazelnuts did cover all the kids’ college tuitions, and Jocie, Evan, and Toby, all in their 20s, still return every harvest and at various points throughout the year to help. The hazelnuts drop right before the rains, and there’s a rush to collect the nuts (water makes them susceptible to mold). The family watches for storm clouds hovering at the farthest hillside; when they appear, they know they have 10 to 18 hours before the storms start and three or four days to gather all the nuts on the ground. “Sometimes we’re driving home after harvest right in front of the rain,” Barb says.

Despite her success, Barb isn’t looking to make the business any bigger. “I have no interest in growing beyond recognizing my customers on the phone, and I don’t want to lose track of quality,” she says. She walks among the tidy rows of hazelnut trees, touching a starburst-shape cluster of nuts. “These trees are 30 years old and live to be a hundred,” she says, smiling. “I figure I’m covered.”

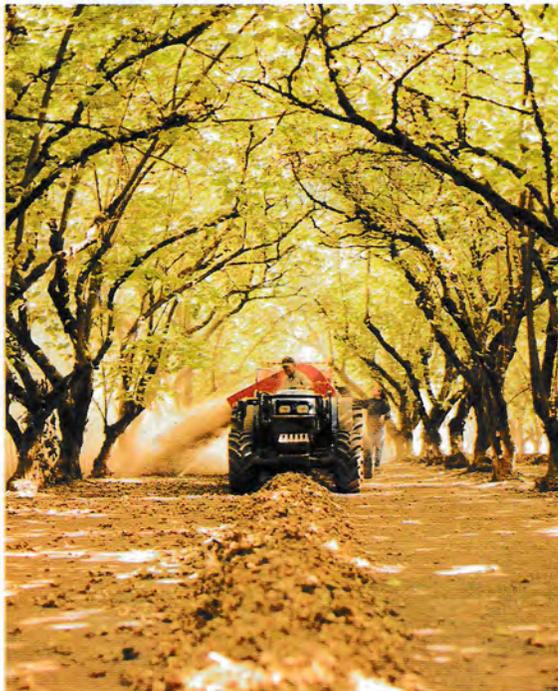
Hazelnuts can be purchased at freddyguys.com and at the Freddy Guys booth on Saturday mornings at the Portland Farmers Market, portlandfarmersmarket.org.





FROM GROWING TO ROASTING

Opposite, top Hazelnuts are biennials. 2009 was an “up year” for hazelnuts, meaning that each cluster produced more than one nut; this year, it will be a “down year,” with only one nut. Opposite, bottom The farm is a family affair: Uncle Ray Newton, Barb Foulke, and husband Fritz Foulke. Barb and Fritz’s three grown children also lend a hand at harvest time. Top row, from left Barb rakes the arbor. The nuts are taken in bins to the sorting and shelling line. Barb’s cousin Katie Jones driving the sweeper, which gathers the nuts into tidy rows. Middle row The harvester vacuums up nuts and blows away debris, leaving clean nuts to bobble into a bin behind. Newton stops to see if the bin is full. Bottom row The nuts ride a conveyor belt into the cracker. The bin that holds the nuts drops them one by one into the cracker for shelling. After the nuts go through the roasting line, they get a once-over for quality control.





BROCCOLI RABE AND
BUTTERNUT SQUASH PIZZAS
WITH HAZELNUT DOUGH



SEARED SCALLOPS
WITH ROASTED BRUSSELS SPROUTS
AND HAZELNUT VINAIGRETTE

OUT OF THEIR SHELLS

Hazelnuts give crunch and flavor to savory dishes as well as desserts. *Opposite* The nuts can be rolled into rich pizza dough to create fall-perfect broccoli rabe pizza and butternut squash pizza, which is finished with more nuts. *Clockwise from above* Hazelnut oil and chopped, toasted hazelnuts add nutty goodness to the toasty notes in a dish of seared scallops and roasted brussels sprouts. Hazelnuts also bring delicate flavor to simple buttery cookies. Perhaps the most classic combination is a hazelnut and chocolate spread, which the Swiss and Italians call gianduja. Ground hazelnuts give a sweet, earthy flavor to pancakes. They add a nuttier note to a parsley pesto, which can be slathered on sandwiches (this one includes chicken, radicchio, and caramelized onion) or stirred into soups.



HAZELNUT COOKIES



PARSLEY AND HAZELNUT PESTO



HAZELNUT PANCAKES



HAZELNUT-CHOCOLATE SPREAD





CANDIED HAZELNUTS

NATURALLY GREAT
Candied hazelnuts combine sea salt and crunchy hazelnuts with dark caramel. *Opposite* Surrounded by their husks, hazelnuts rest on the arbor's clean-swept ground, waiting to be harvested. SEE WORKBOOK FOR RECIPES

PRODUCED BY Sarah Carey and Ayesha Patel