

Planting Roots in the High Country: New Book Reveals the Trials and Triumphs of Growing Food at 9,000 Feet

A new coffee table book shows how the former publishers of Bon Appetit magazine brokered a truce with Mother Nature by using old world farming techniques grounded in sustainable practices and modern technology to successfully grow crops at high elevations.

Vail Valley, Colo. (August 10, 2018)—Knapp Ranch is a farm located in an unlikely place: close to Vail, Colorado at an elevation known more for its world-class skiing than its Pac Choi lettuce. Despite the challenges of a short growing season, unpredictable weather and resident wildlife, Betsy and Bud Knapp, former powerhouse publishers of both *Bon Appetit* and *Architectural Digest* magazines, learned how to make peace with Mother Nature to build a successful, working ranch that produces an array of produce, flowers and honey. They share an abundance of ideas for farming in a challenging environment in their new book *Living Beneath the Colorado Peaks: The Story of Knapp Ranch*.

“When we learned that early settlers grew lettuce, potatoes and rhubarb in this valley, we became intrigued with the idea that we could do it too. Our integrated collaborative programs increase the role of science and technology to ensure that what we learn here can be useful for others in this field, and our place-based systems allow for the development of a longer-term perspective and an ability to see how plants, animals and even people interact with this environment over time. In essence, we are working with what nature gives us, recognizing that it will change and being nimble to keep up with it,” Betsy and Bud Knapp said in their book.

In addition to the basic challenges of soil amendment, crop rotation, soil type, water supply and elevation, the Knapps embarked on a years-long horticultural journey of discovery that included:

- Implementing permaculture practices to maximize natural resources
- Identifying microclimates and choosing appropriate site-specific plantings
- Designing an edible ecosystem
- Adhering to organic farming practices
- Installing weather and climate monitoring technology
- Using deep-rooted plants to work as elevators to deliver nutrients to crops
- Planting natural aromatic pest diffusers
- Learning from the history of the area and what crops traditionally worked best in the region
- Beekeeping and the value of natural pollinators
- Orchardling at elevation

Entrepreneurs by nature, the Knapps’ experimentation paid off. They successfully created a farm with world-class production in small-scale agriculture. Knapp Ranch produces colorful, eye-catching produce, including blue potatoes, atomic red carrots, watermelon radish and deep leafy greens.

Its’ much sought-after salad blends and microgreens are coveted by Vail-area chefs and grocers. The ranch sells four blended lettuce varieties that contain interesting and tasty greens like Pac Choi, Tatsoi, Yukina Savoy and Cherokee Crisp. But it’s the microgreens that have gotten the most attention from chefs. The tiny edible plants, grown in the ranch’s hoop houses, are more mature than sprouts but younger than full-grown plants, and are packed with nutritional value and remarkable flavor.

Anyone interested in small-scale farming, organic practices and sustainability will find inspiration and an abundance of information to boost yields, problem solve challenges and inspire modern farmers to collaborate with Mother Nature rather than fight against her.

Author Sarah Chase Shaw is a landscape architect and an Aspen-based freelance writer whose expertise includes landscape architecture, land planning and design in the American West. She is the author of two previous books on those subjects. The Knapp Ranch book features the photography of Todd Winslow Pierce, a Vail-based award-winning landscape and fine art photographer whose images have appeared in national and regional publications, advertisements and fine art galleries.

Living Beneath the Colorado Peaks: The Story of Knapp Ranch is an 11” x 13” hardcover book with 288 pages and over 200 photographs, drawings, maps, historical pictures and an index. Retail price, \$70. ISBN 978-1-4236-5096-6. It will be available for sale beginning Sept. 11, at [Gibbs Smith](#), www.KnappRanch.com and at online sellers, independent bookstores and other quality retail outlets.

###

About Knapp Ranch

[Knapp Ranch](#) is situated in the Vail valley of Colorado. Its owners, Betsy and Bud Knapp fell in love with the property on first sight. As their knowledge of and affection for the land grew, the Knapps expanded their vision beyond building an informal country retreat for family and friends. Twenty-five years in the making, Knapp Ranch is now a thriving working farm using sustainable practices; it is an exemplar for land management and water conservation, an inspiration for architectural design and traditional craftsmanship, a contributor to climate science studies, a lab for horticultural experimentation, a US Forest Service partner, an educational center for environmental studies of all kinds and it continues to evolve. Encouraged by friends and professionals to document their journey and share their knowledge with others, the result is *Living Beneath the Colorado Peaks: The Story of Knapp Ranch*.

About Distributor Gibbs Smith, Publisher

[Gibbs Smith](#) is a Utah-based publisher, founded in 1969. Its trade and special interest division publishes high-end quality products on a variety of subjects including non-fiction, home and design, cooking, regional titles, as well as distribute for select publishers. Additional information about the book is available at www.GibbsSmith.com and www.KnappRanch.com.

Media Contacts:

Karin Gamba, Resort Trends, Inc.
[Karin's email](#), Phone: 970-948-3151

or

Patsy Popejoy, Resort Trends, Inc.
[Patsy's email](#), Phone: 317-509-7384