

ADIRONDACK MADE } BY ELIZABETH FOLWELL

## WELL-DRESSED FOOD

### GOURMET FARE FROM TUPPER LAKE

"WHEN I STARTED THE business I would come up with a recipe, make many batches and send them to 15 to 20 of my friends and family around the country," says David Tomberlin, 41, founder of Well Dressed Food, in Tupper Lake. "Without fail I would get 15 to 20 contradictory opinions: too hot, too mild, too thick, too thin, too sweet, not sweet enough."

Now, for the maker of two dozen savory sauces, preserves, granola, pancake mix, desserts and spiced nuts, product development still begins at his kitchen stove but the test crew is limited to a handful of trusted friends. There's more to the process than just whipping up a delicious and unusual condiment; the item has to be replicable in an 80-gallon steam kettle.

Tomberlin first came to the Adirondacks a decade ago, and his love for the region and the desire to launch an encore career in food trumped his work at a software company in Georgia. His Adirondack business started in 2006 with nine products.

An Atlanta native, eating well and eating locally were part of his childhood. He picked pecans and figs at his grandmother's home, which ended up on the family table.

"I've incorporated my Southern culinary roots with several of our products, including Firepit Grilling Sauce and Sweet Onion Jam," Tomberlin explains. North Country bounty is different, of course, but there are plenty of regional raw materials such as apples and berries. "Most of our products are sweetened with local maple syrup or honey versus high-fructose corn syrup. I like to take a tra-

ditional recipe and give it a twist," he says.

This enterprise, with a compact storefront on a renovated block in downtown Tupper Lake, outsources production of its proprietary recipes. Sauces, preserves and bottled items are cooked and packed in Keeseville; other foods are made in licensed commercial kitchens in central New York. Tomberlin's goal is to bring all manufacturing to town and create sustainable jobs.

Many Well Dressed offerings have earned shelf space in boutiques across the country as well as awards for taste, with the granola frequently earning national press. But resting on his laurels—or rosemary sprigs—is not in the business plan. Says Tomberlin, "We're working on a bean dip to be released this summer—another product that draws on my Southern roots—along with a McIntosh hot-pepper grilling sauce."

For cooks who would like to add jazzy local flavors to their own repertoire, Tomberlin supplies recipe cards for dishes such as baked brie with walnuts and buckwheat honey, Firepit-enhanced turkey meatloaf and chicken salad with grilled asparagus and peanut sauce. When he's not in the shop filling mail orders or at a farmers' market handing out samples, he's on Simon Pond in his restored Chris-Craft, mulling the next new thing in Adirondack taste. 🌿

**Well Dressed Food**  
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