

MAY 11 - 12, 2022

# BAYFIELD FOODS CSA

Community Supported Agriculture



## Superior Small Batch - In the Business of Real Food

**SHANE DICKEY & GAIL FRANCIS - SUPERIOR SMALL BATCH**

The commercial kitchen facility where we produce our food is below ground level, so the cell reception leaves something to be desired. Still, the voice that came across the phone that day was loud and clear: "Is this Superior Small Batch?" Even though we print our telephone number on every retail package we send out into the world, very few people have ever seen fit to call it. I stopped what I was doing and perked up. I replied that it was indeed Superior Small Batch and inquired how I could be of service. "I just had one of those Heartyburgers," said the voice, with purpose. Then, after a pause: "That sausage you make isn't bad, but the Heartyburger tasted nothing at all like a hamburger. I won't be buying them again." I was momentarily confused, not understanding the basis for the comparison this person had just made. In my role as customer service rep, my inclination was to apologize. But what for? Before I could get this worked out in my head, the caller had hung up.

In the fall of 2016, before launching Superior Small Batch, we took a deep dive into the world of plant-based prepared foods. Various publications ranging from Fortune magazine and the New York Times to the New Hope Network and Vegetarian Resource Journal presented an unambiguous message: the demand for plant-based prepared foods had never been stronger and was on a sharp upswing. Long-standing companies such as Morningstar Farms and Tofurkey were seeing record profits and relative newcomers like Field Roast and Beyond Meat were in high demand. This information gave us confidence that our nascent food company was poised for success. We incorporated Superior Small Batch in December of 2016 and having wrapped up a year's worth of research and development, started marketing our 100% plant-based prepared foods straightaway. Our sales were slow but steady, and showed consistent growth from quarter to quarter. That trend - relatively slow but steady growth - has continued for us until today. But if there really was a meteoric rise in demand for the type of food we were making, our sales weren't reflecting it.

What we understood in 2016 to be a growing tendency among average folks to re-conceive the meal, to re-assess the necessity of meat and construct a plate around nuts, grains, vegetables and legumes, had not amounted to a turning away from meat as such, but evolved into a demand for a different kind of meat. People still hungered for cheeseburgers and chicken nuggets, but were up for giving a flesh-free alternative a try so long as it smelled, looked and tasted like the "real" thing. What may have started as a veggieburger renaissance had become a fake meat revolution.



**Some of the real food veggies you can find in our plant-based foods.**



**A beautiful giant sweet potato, about to be peeled and placed into our products.**

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But where did that leave Superior Small Batch? From the beginning, we built our recipes on whole ingredients, sourced as close to home as possible, prepared in a simple and straightforward way. We wanted to market veggieburgers that folks could make themselves with ingredients from their own garden, the local farmer's market, or the neighborhood grocery store. We worked hard to build a depth of flavor and diverse nutritional profile without unknowable additives, unpronounceable preservatives or refined sugars. Our food doesn't pretend or masquerade. SSB is as far away from fake as a homegrown tomato. No one is going to mistake a Heartyburger for a Big Mac, and that's the way we want it.

Our customers recognize the effort we make, and appreciate it. Many SSB devotees are not vegans, but instead want to eat minimally-processed, whole foods. For them, tonight's dinner might be a venison roast and homegrown potatoes, and tomorrow's, a Curryburger and kale chips. Other customers of ours whose diets are 100% plant-based are also drawn to us because of our no-nonsense ingredient lists. We take strength and inspiration from sentiments like this one we recently received: "I love that there is no junk in the burgers. Thank you for your efforts to provide clean plant-based food. I won't buy junky, highly-processed food just because someone adds the words 'plant-based'."

After much consternation, we finally realized what the fake meat explosion did for our business: it provided a rare opportunity to define ourselves in what has become a crowded and competitive market. SSB is in the business of *real* food.

## "Sausage Over Pebbles"

***This recipe idea was shared with us by SSB customer and friend Marianne Torntore, who adapted it from one of her Sicilian father's favorite recipes. Here's what Marianne says: Cut an Original Banger roll in cubes and saute it in lots of garlic. Put over cooked, seasoned lentils with your favorite aromatic spices and bake until browned. Enjoy!***

