



# Craig Bero

## Housatonic, MA

When is being “driven” exhilarating, inspiring, and nourishing? When it’s in the passionate mind and the heart of Craig Bero, the creator of Pleasant and Main Café, an idiosyncratic space serving up food with a commitment to building community. An acknowledged major presence in the artist-run, salon restaurant culture of Greenwich Village for over 30 years, Craig emphatically states, “I don’t want to be known as having a restaurant. I want my cafés to be a place where the spirit of our community can flourish.”

Born and raised in a northern Wisconsin village surrounded by apple and cherry orchards, Belgian farmers introduced Craig to the concept of the “harvest table” and a philosophy of the purity of food. Food, particularly wild food, helps create an intimate environment in which every meal strives to be the Thanksgiving dinner. At the University of Wisconsin, he majored in theater and minored in agriculture. Armed with an MFA, this classically trained actor moved to New York City. While Craig sought acting work, he made a living in the restaurant world. Settling in Greenwich Village for thirty some years, he owned small, French-inspired, theater cafés, but he never really left his Wisconsin village. His mother joined him and baked bread for his café in wood fired ovens.

When Craig’s café was ruined by 9/11, he reopened in Tribeca, pressing on until the Freedom Tower opened and his rent went from \$2,500 to \$36,000 a month. Still driven by his passion he headed north. Craig was familiar with this region as wood for his ovens came from Columbia County, NY. Friends suggested that he look at a vacant former restaurant in Housatonic. He did, and Pleasant and Main Café was born. As Craig gets up from our interview to leave to forage for wild watercress, a local farmer comes by to talk raspberries. Craig has brought the “harvest table” philosophy to Housatonic, barely stopping for a breath. In Craig’s words, “To hesitate is to die.”

**Photography:** Lucy Kennedy

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