



Angelo Garro and his Nonna.

Worth His Salt

In 2006's bestseller *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, there's a rather poignant chapter about Michael Pollan's hunter-gatherer mentor. A blacksmith with a storied kitchen in a San Francisco forge, Angelo Garro travels with the author to the Sonoma Coast, where they forage for chanterelles and hunt wild boar. The outspoken Pollan has shied from endorsements; however, in his words, "My debt to Angelo is so deep, and his salt so special, that I have no choice. Rule broken."

You see, anyone who has picked grapes or pickled herring with Garro, or attended one of his feasts, has likely clamored for his salt. "About 20-some years ago, I started to make a mix that I was going to use for rubbing on meat, and fish and vegetables. And I did it and gave it to friends, and they loved it—and came back again and again and again," says Garro. "I've been sharing recipes forever—except for the recipe of the salt."

Garro is native to sun-drenched Siracusa, where wild fennel grows rampant and sun-drenched Nero d'Avola grapes grow plump in volcanic soil. The Sicilian wind carries ancient history along with the fragrance of Tarocco oranges. Both his mother and "Nonna" taught him to cook. "My grandmother said, 'As long as you have black pepper, red pepper and salt, you can make everything taste OK.'"

The artisan blacksmith learned his trade in Switzerland and established a distinguished career in Toronto. He decamped to San Francisco in 1983, and he has remained a master of ironwork, from romantic balustrades to cast sculpture. During this time, Garro's Renaissance Forge has become far more than a metal fabrication studio. From the rafters, salumi dangles like pendant lighting as it cures. Barrels of wine wait, and animals are whole-roasted. Pasta, sunny from the semolina, is from scratch. Everything is handmade. Of the convivial dinners, says longtime grape-picking companion and business associate Beth Malik, "Friends bring friends. It's always growing with new people."

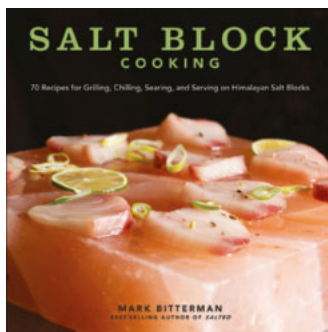
A year ago, Malik—a former product development specialist at Levi Strauss—told Garro about crowdfunding website Kickstarter. (She would soon help with sourcing and production.) Garro says the time was right: "I'm semiretired. I still do some metalwork, but not like in the old days. I could start doing something." CONTINUED ON PAGE 200



Omnivore Salt, \$10/6 oz., omnivoresalt.com.

GARRO AND NONNA: URSULA HELLER; SALT (2): LAURIE FRANKEL

THE CURE Selmelier Mark Bitterman has penned the definitive salt block guide. \$25, Andrews McMeel Publishing.



ON THE BLOCK: CUCUMBER SALAD

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| 1 (8x12x2-inch or 10x10x2-inch) salt block | 2 T. extra virgin olive oil | 1 T. rice wine vinegar or white wine vinegar |
| 4 small Kirby (or 2 med. English) cucumbers, cut in ¼-inch slices | 1 small garlic clove, minced | 2 T. chopped fresh dill |
| | ¼ small red onion, finely chopped | |
| | ¼ t. ground black pepper | SERVES 4 |

Arrange the cucumber slices in a single layer on the salt block, as though setting up a checkerboard (you will have to do this in batches).

Let sit for 2 minutes. Flip the slices and let cure for another minute. Remove the slices from the block and put in a clean, lint-free kitchen towel.

Wrap the towel around the slices and wring purposefully but gently to remove any excess moisture. Put the cucumbers in a serving bowl. Wipe off the block and repeat the process with the remaining cucumber slices.

Add the oil, garlic, onion, pepper, vinegar, and dill to the bowl. Toss to coat evenly. Serve immediately, or refrigerate for up to 2 days.

