

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Travel Channel Films Trout Ribs™ in WNC

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The Travel Channel is coming to Western North Carolina. Why? Trout ribs™ and trout caviar. Trout ribs are a combination of local foods, traditional North Carolina cuisine, and a dash of Asian influence invented by Tres Hundertmark, executive chef at The Lobster Trap in Asheville. Trout caviar is a specialty of Sunburst Trout Farm, the only producer of caviar in the region, developed by founder Dick Jennings and perfected by three generations of family who have run the farm since. Trout ribs—offering both the finger-food appeal of ribs and a unique culinary concept— and trout caviar--fish eggs that are both exceptionally mild in taste and exceptionally bright in color— have caught the attention of the Travel Channel, which will be filming at The Lobster Trap and Sunburst Trout Farm for *Bizarre Foods with Andrew Zimmern* in October.

Sunburst and The Lobster Trap will be co-branding trout ribs to sell in the restaurant and through grocers, and their collaboration is a true farm to table story. Hundertmark was visiting Sunburst, a scenic farm located near the Shining Rock Wilderness area, when he had the idea for trout ribs. If he hadn't worked with local farmers, he "would never have come up with the idea."

Hundertmark saw that when Sunburst's staff cut trout fillets off the bone, a rack with 3 to 5 ounces of meat was left over. He began looking for a way to make use of it. After brining racks, flavoring them with seasonings including vanilla bourbon, marinating, smoking, and then grilling them, he arrived at the answer: trout ribs. Sally Eason, daughter of Jennings and current owner of Sunburst, tells a similar story. When he was cleaning fish, their amber roe would spill out and he knew they had to do something with it. After trying over 50 caviar recipes, they've arrived at one that, according to Eason, is "never fishy." The aftertaste "is like the best buttered roll. Babies love it!" she says.

North Carolina is known for its barbeque, a tradition Hundertmark honors, using a sweet and sour tomato base for the trout rib sauce. And while caviar might bring the Caspian Sea to mind before Carolina, trout is a regional food. Western North Carolina is one of the top six trout producers in the US, with an environment well suited to fish farming.

The Lobster Trap complements Maine lobster with certified Appalachian Grown ingredients, including fruits and vegetables as well as trout. Appalachian Grown, a program of the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project, identifies farm products from small family farms in the Southern Appalachians. The Eason family labels their products Appalachian Grown because they "love to keep food miles down and sell locally." (After all, their production facilities are only 50 yards from the raceways so there is less than an hour's time between when fish are harvested and when their processing is complete.)

At the same time that trout ribs have strong local roots, Hundertmark says, "The chi of the thing is relatively Asian." He's referring not only to some of the seasonings on the ribs, but to the economical philosophy that led him to create them—they make use of what would have otherwise gone to waste. Fine diners' mindsets are changing with times and they're not necessarily seeking what's rare or foreign anymore. The people who have tasted trout ribs—and the Travel

Channel—appreciate the dish’s “creativity” Hundertmark says. Meanwhile, trout caviar costs only a tenth as much as some sturgeon caviar, and with bans on sturgeon caviar due to loss of habitat and over-fishing, is a much more sustainable delicacy.

ABOUT THE APPALACHIAN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE PROJECT

The Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project is a nonprofit organization with the mission to create and expand regional community-based and integrated food systems that are locally owned and controlled, environmentally sound, economically viable and health-promoting. Among many other projects, ASAP works to match chefs and local suppliers, help restaurants advertise local ingredients, and organize events featuring local foods.

ABOUT THE LOBSTER TRAP

The Lobster Trap is a fresh seafood and oyster bar supporting sustainable agriculture and aquaculture from the mountains to the sea, located at 35 Patton Ave Asheville, NC 28801. Contact The Lobster Trap at (828)350-0505 or <http://thelobstertrap.biz>.

ABOUT SUNBURST TROUT FARM

Three generations of the same family have maintained Sunburst Trout Farm, located in Canton, NC. Sunburst offers trout fillets, smoked trout, caviar, trout dip, rainbow trout cakes, trout jerky, trout gift boxes, and other unique food items and gifts. Learn more at <http://www.sunbursttrout.com>.

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