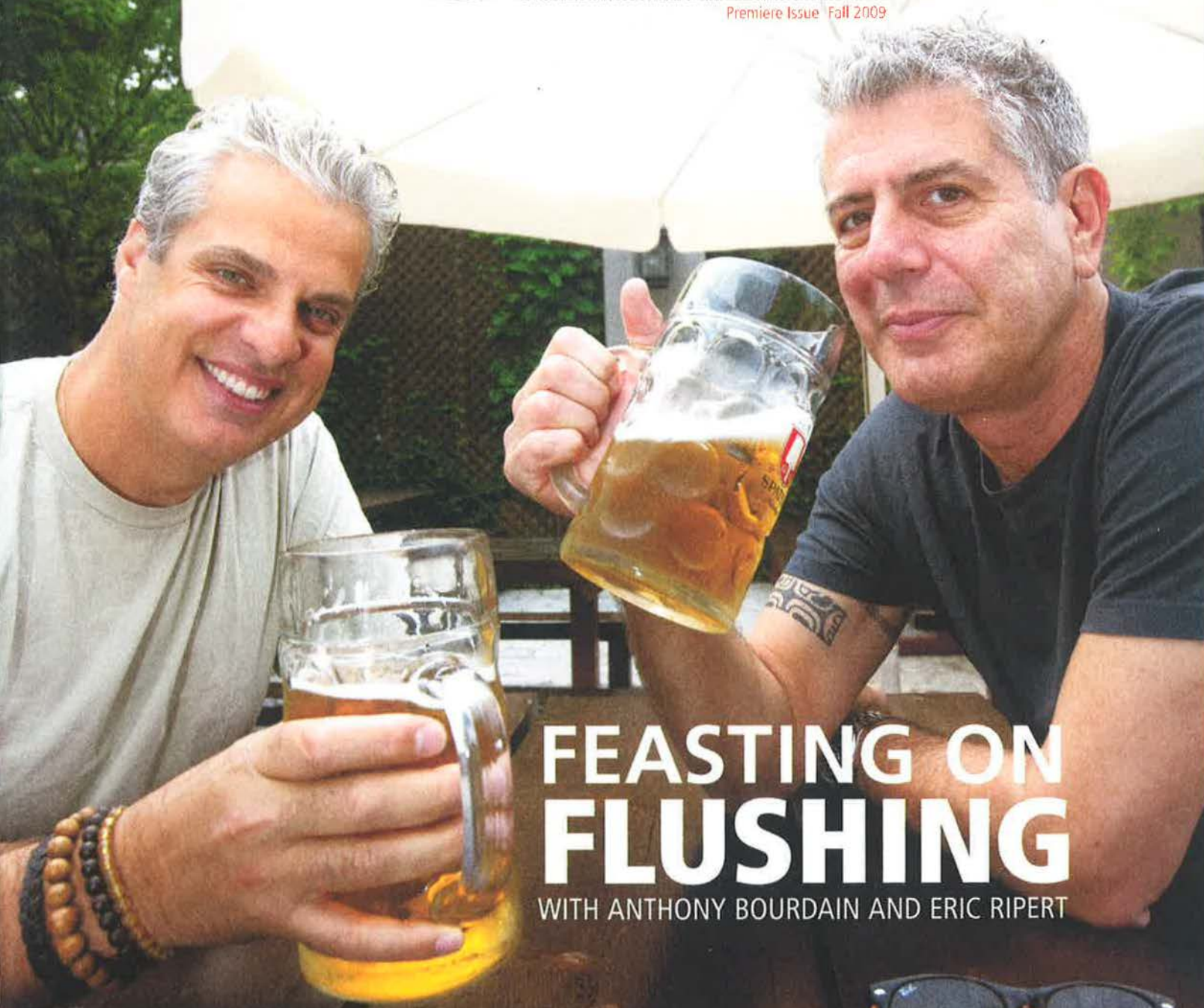


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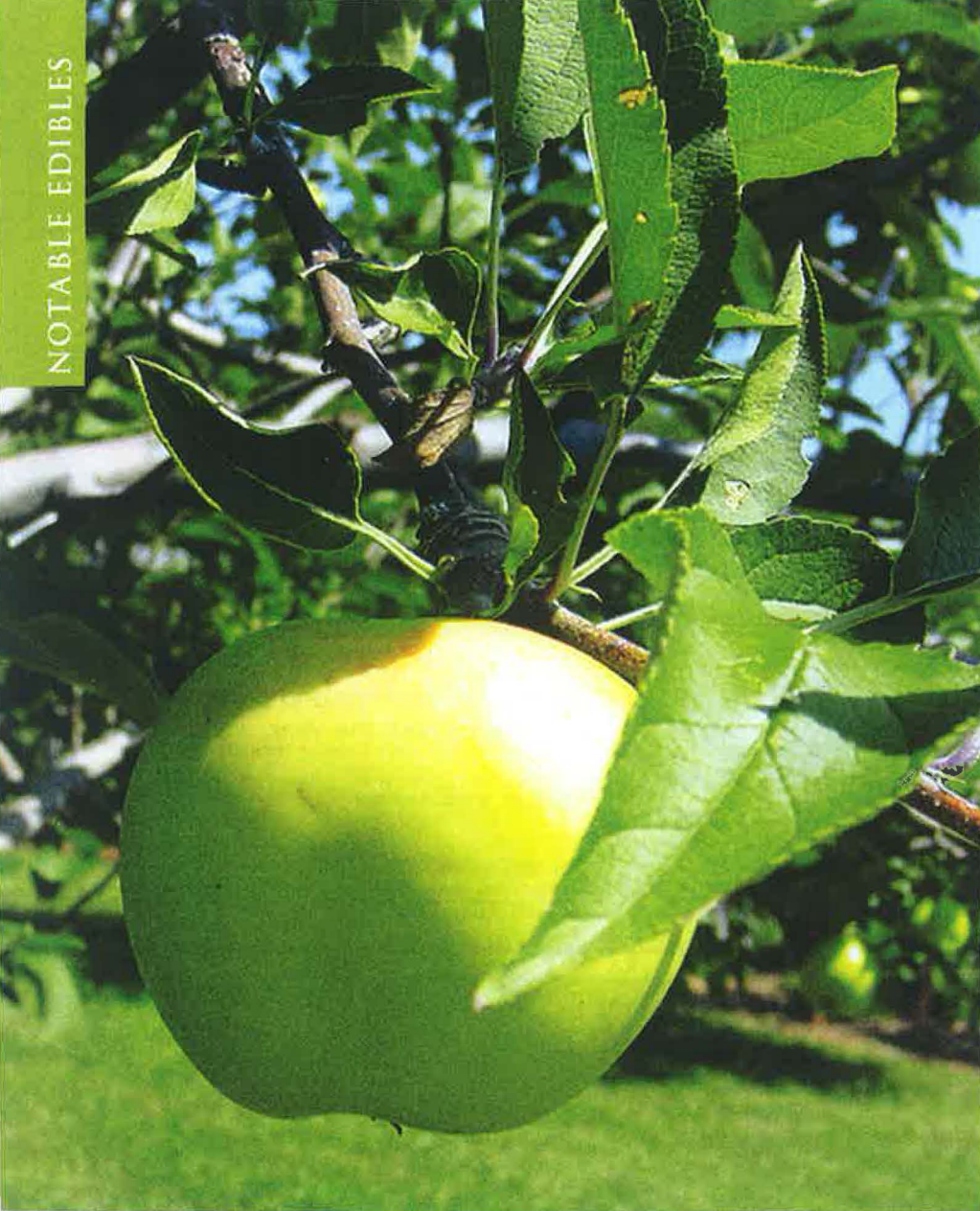


FEASTING ON FLUSHING

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Red Jacket Orchards will sell the Newtown Pippin this fall at several of the city's Greenmarkets, including Sunnyside and Long Island City. Find locations at www.ediblequeens.com.

THE APPLE OF OUR EYE

For a city known as “The Big Apple,” New York has little connection to its namesake fruit. Most people have no idea that one of the country's oldest and most loved apple varieties, the Newtown Pippin—dubbed “The Prince of Apples” by Thomas Jefferson, who exported saplings to his Monticello estate—has its roots deep in Elmhurst.

Erik Baard, a Long Island City-based environmentalist, is on a mission to change that. Since 2006, Baard has spearheaded a local movement to plant Newtown Pippin saplings across the city and state. “I’m trying to remind New Yorkers of our agricultural heritage one tree at a time,” explains Baard, the borough’s own Johnny Appleseed.

The project started several years ago when Baard’s close friend David Kitsner, CEO of Green Apple Cleaners, an eco-friendly dry cleaning service based in Manhattan, shared his interest in planting trees to offset some of his business’s carbon footprint. “Then Erik told me about the Newtown Pippin, and I knew we had to use this tree, which has so much local significance,” explains Kitsner, a Bayside resident.

The Newtown Pippin—a pippin is an apple grown spontaneously from seed—first took root in the Newtown section of Queens, now Elmhurst, in the 1700s, and was almost universally lauded as one of the best-tasting apples ever grown. But it was never the

prettiest, thanks to its blotchy green hue and irregular shape. During the Civil War, Southerners renamed it the Albermarle Pippin; later, the town of Newtown changed its name to Elmhurst. “There were no more dots to connect,” says Baard, and the Newtown Pippin nearly disappeared from the local landscape.

But now, the Newtown Pippin is making a comeback, thanks to Baard’s tireless promotion and funding from Green Apple Cleaners and Slow Food USA. Over the last two years, 100 Newtown Pippin saplings have been planted in premier public spaces, institutions, neighborhood schools and community gardens. “I want them in every park, school and street,” says Baard. GreenThumb, MillionTreesNYC and the Greenbelt Native Plant Center have agreed to care for the trees as they grow. While the newly planted saplings won’t bear fruit for another few years, Whole Foods Market is already in talks to carry their progeny.

But the biggest news of all may come this fall. This past summer, Councilman James Gennaro, the Fresh Meadows-based environmental chairman of the City Council, introduced a resolution designating the Newtown Pippin as the official apple of New York City. A ruling is expected this fall. “This apple represents both our agricultural past and our future,” says Gennaro. “And the fact that it’s green—symbolizing where we’re going as a sustainable city—that’s an important connection to make.”

Written by Rachel Meltzer Warren with additional reporting by Jamie Feldmar