

# YOUNGER & WISER

**Sophisticated sourcing  
and a global perspective  
informs the future of  
Lake Champlain  
Chocolates**

By MELISSA PASANEN

Photographed by DARIA BISHOP

“We need to appeal to the next generation so it's important that this place is run by the next generation. You've got to get that young thinking in there.”

LEFT TO RIGHT: Ellen Reed and Eric Lampman with their parents and company founders, Jim and Anne Lampman. Now in their 30s, the siblings bring new-school dynamics to keep pace with consumer tastes.

**I**N THE EARLY 1980s, when they owned The Ice House restaurant on the Burlington waterfront, Jim and Anne Lampman began experimenting with the chocolate business. Spurred along by the creations of chef Tad Spurgeon, the couple soon sold their restaurant and devoted themselves to Lake Champlain Chocolates, a business that by 2016 had grown to employ more than 150 people during peak season, with 17,000 square feet of production space, three Vermont shops and sales to about 2,000 stores around the country.

The Lampmans' children, Eric and Ellen, grew up right alongside Lake Champlain Chocolates, working there as teenagers, and both chose to return to Vermont after college to climb the ranks at the company. In July, Eric, now 32, and Ellen Reed, 36, were named president and vice president, respectively. There was no expectation they would inherit the company, nor obligation to work there, each said. "People would always ask me, 'Are you going to take over?'" Eric said. "And I'd say, 'I'm not going to take anything.'" Their father retains the title of CEO and is still very involved in the business, but he recognizes that the baton must be passed: "We need to





**THIS PAGE** In South Burlington, the making of Blue Bandana bars includes collecting freshly roasted beans and adding sugar to the melangeur. **OPPOSITE, FROM TOP LEFT** A conveyor carries bars to be wrapped, and ultimately savored in front of the fireplace. Pictured ingredients for s'mores are handcrafted graham crackers by Queen of Tarts (Elizabeth Lowe), Lake Champlain Gourmet Vanilla Marshmallows and Blue Bandana chocolate bars.

appeal to the next generation so it's important that this place is run by the next generation. I'm not as quick to pick up on things as I was. You've got to get that young thinking in there."

The most obvious result is a line of single-origin, dark chocolate bars called Blue Bandana, made since 2014 in a dedicated space just north of company headquarters in Burlington. Unlike the truffles and other confections upon which Lake Champlain Chocolates built its reputation, Blue Bandana chocolate is made entirely from scratch with just two ingredients: pure organic sugar and raw cacao beans, sourced directly from farmers in Madagascar, Guatemala, Tanzania and the Dominican Republic. Coaxing smooth, supple chocolate out of fruity cacao beans is a time-consuming, complex process that few American chocolate companies have traditionally undertaken; rather, they buy European-made chocolate in bulk and focus on the confectionery skills of blending, flavoring, filling and forming. With Blue Bandana, Lake Champlain Chocolates dove deeper.

(Continued on page 67)





THE  
**VERMONT FLANNEL**  
AUTHENTIC COMPANY ORIGINAL  
"DEDICATED TO WORLD COMFORT"  
USA



**HANDCRAFTED IN USA**  
**VERMONTFLANNEL.COM**



**25<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

LOUNGE PANTS  
CLASSIC SHIRTS  
BLANKETS  
CLOTHING FOR MEN  
WOMEN AND CHILDREN



**LOVE VERMONT FLANNEL  
AND LOVE VERMONT LIFE**



**WOODSTOCK  
BURLINGTON  
FERRISBURGH  
JOHNSON  
EAST BARRE**  
1 800 232 7820  
**VERMONTFLANNEL.COM**



Winner: 2016 Trip Advisor's Certificate of Excellence Award. New exercise facility, breakfast lobby. Near shopping; restaurants; skiing: Killington, Pico, Okemo.

**RUTLAND, VT**  
(866) 387-9066 [rutland.hamptoninn.com](http://rutland.hamptoninn.com)



Committed to the support of local agriculture, serving meals and cocktails that are creative and seasonal. Fine dining downstairs, casual fare and live music upstairs.

**MANCHESTER CENTER, VT**  
(802) 362-2817 [perfectwife.com](http://perfectwife.com)



## **HAND-CRAFTED PIZZA SMOKED BBQ**

*Dine in and take out*

**New York-Style Pizza  
BBQ Smoked in-house  
Sandwiches  
Salads  
Full Bar**

75 Elliot Street  
Brattleboro, VT 05301  
802.579.1092  
[hazelpizza.com](http://hazelpizza.com)



## **LimLaw Family MAPLE FARM**

**O**pen for Breakfast in the spring and fall - check website for details.

**M**aple Syrup, other maple products, and pure honey available all year and we ship anywhere in the world. Gift Baskets offered during holiday season.

**N**ow offering wagon rides through our sugarbush with our Belgian Draft Horse Team - during breakfast hours.

**f 'like' us on facebook and  
visit our website: [www.limlawmaplefarm.com](http://www.limlawmaplefarm.com)**

**246 Vermont Route 25 West Topsham, VT 05086**  
**(802) 439-6880 (802) 439-5995**

(Continued from page 62)

Beyond the emphasis on craft, the new chocolate bars reflect changes in how many Americans, particularly young consumers, view food. Eric and Ellen's generation are often keenly aware of food-system dynamics and seek to understand what they eat in its cultural, social and environmental context.

They expect to know where their food comes from, who is growing it and how; these sophisticated consumers appreciate unique flavors that come with a story tied to their place of origin. It does not surprise them that the Tanzanian Blue Bandana bar tastes distinctly different from the Guatemalan, that this range from floral to fruity to spicy is expressive of the regions where the cacao is grown.

**F**ROM THE EARLY DAYS of Lake Champlain Chocolates, the Lampmans sourced local butter, cream, maple syrup and honey, but it took a trip in 2009 to visit cacao farmers in the Dominican Republic for Eric to realize, he recalled, "that we really didn't know that much about our main ingredient." He came home and started roasting up tiny batches of cacao beans in his home oven, separating the nibs from their shells using a hair dryer, before grinding them into the paste that would eventually become chocolate. The hair dryer blew cacao pieces all over the room. One day, he said, "I grabbed a blue bandana to put over my nose and mouth." Later, when developing the new line, it struck him that it could work as a name. "It's literal and symbolic," he explained. "It makes you think of something that's American-made, roll-up-your-sleeves."

As American as it may sound, Blue Bandana is also made possible thanks to a very 21st-century global dynamic, Eric explained, gesturing to his smartphone. "Barriers have been destroyed through technology, and the balance of power has changed," he said. "It's not all

SHELBURNE MUSEUM PRESENTS

NOV 19, 2016-  
JAN 22, 2017

**HARD-EDGE** COOL

**THE ROUTHIER COLLECTION OF MID-CENTURY PRINTS**

SHELBURNE MUSEUM . ORG

**HILL FARM INN**

Combining regional history & small town charm with luxurious amenities for an unforgettable stay. Offering several lodging options for discerning travelers.



[hillfarminn.com](http://hillfarminn.com) | 802.375.2269  
458 Hill Farm Road, Sunderland, VT 05250





Keep Jack Frost  
from nipping at  
your toes!



www.socklady.com  
802-765-4177



Mismatched socks for Adults, Kids & Babies!



**Red House**  
Fine Homebuilding &  
Historic Restoration

Timeless Craftsmanship  
Employee-Owned

**802.655.0009**

BURLINGTON, VT  
www.redhousebuilding.com

controlled by big [cacao] brokers any-  
more. We can cut out the middleman.  
I can dial up a farmer in Guatemala.  
I can follow him on Instagram," he  
continued. "For my sister and me, this  
opened up a new sense of how we could  
think globally and act globally." Even  
though Blue Bandana remains less than  
10 percent of the company's business,  
the line has had broader impact, Ellen  
said, on her behind-the-scenes work of  
ingredient sourcing: "It has brought us  
more understanding of the supply chain  
overall. We know we can know more  
now. It inspires us to do better." Over  
the last several years, Ellen led a suc-  
cessful project to obtain a third-party  
certification called Fair for Life. Under  
the arrangement, the company submits  
to regular audits on all of its sourcing  
relationships as well as working condi-  
tions for employees in Vermont.

Her role on the back end, Ellen said,  
complements the upfront work of her  
brother and father. "It gives us each our  
own space," she said. "We don't agree  
all the time, but you learn to pick your  
battles." Eric added, "We challenge each  
other, but we don't yell and scream."

Jim acknowledged that he and Anne  
have been approached by companies  
and investors who would have paid  
handsomely for Lake Champlain Choc-  
olates, but "Who knows what they'd  
do with it?" he said, noting that many  
valued management and production  
team members have been with the com-  
pany for decades. Sitting in his office  
with photos of his children and grand-  
children on the wall, he said, "It makes  
me happy Eric and Ellen can stay here  
and earn a really respectable living in  
Vermont." The family is close-knit and  
spends time together outside of work,  
Jim said; business is never discussed.  
Even so, he reflected, "My relationship  
with my children has changed. It's not a  
negative, but different. They're not just  
your kids anymore." 🍫



- 1 Blake Hill Pre
- 2 Branon Famil
- 3 Butternut Mo
- 4 Champlain Or
- 5 DRINKmaple
- 6 Eden Speciatt
- 7 Hidden Spring
- 8 Mother Myrick
- 9 Nitty Gritty Gr
- 10 Red Kite Cand
- 11 Sidehill Farm
- 12 Sugar Bob's S
- 13 Tonewood
- 14 True North Gr
- 15 Vermont Artis
- 16 VT Farmstead
- 17 Vermont Fres