



Tiffany Hilton pictured in her studio in Northampton, Massachusetts.
Photo: Lynne Graves.

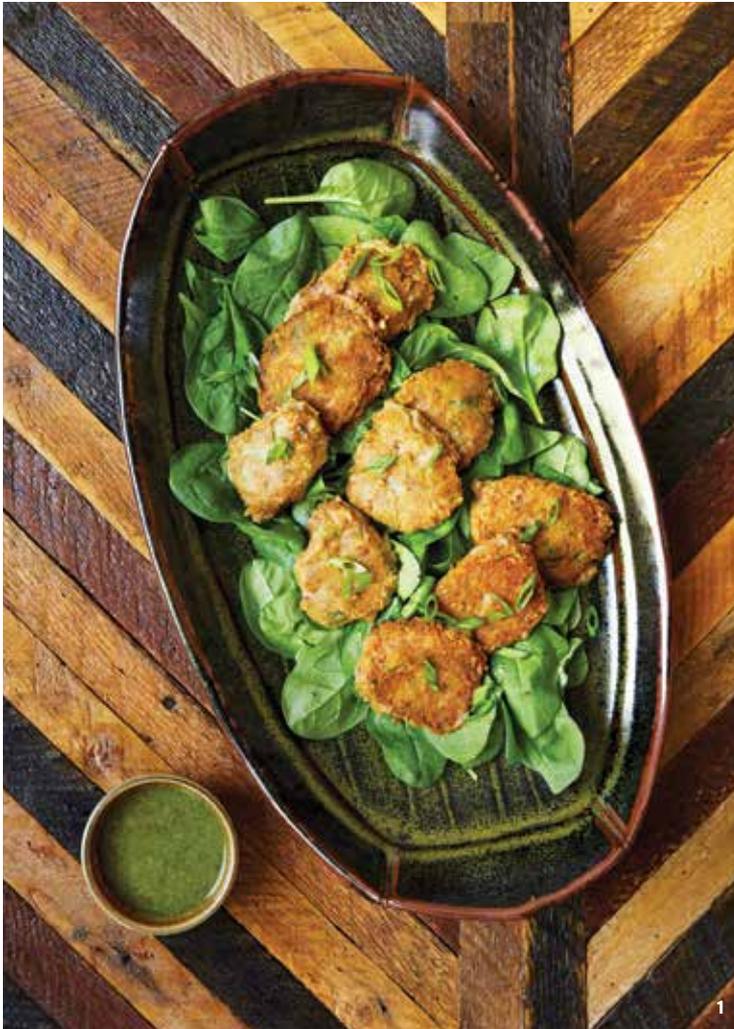
Artisan by Tiffany Hilton *in* Residence

What a sweet surprise it was to receive an email in January from the editor of *Edible Pioneer Valley* asking if I would be interested in being their first artisan in residence. She said, “I’d like to try something different this year and have one person showcase a variety of work over all four issues. You were the first person who came to mind!”

Impact and Support

Edible Pioneer Valley is a well-regarded, free, quarterly magazine that features local producers of food products, farmers, chefs, restaurants, and makers from our region. Our community of

small businesses and entrepreneurs in western Massachusetts is proud to support local agriculture, buy local, and have dozens of CSA (community supported agriculture) options to choose from. *Edible* has used my pottery in photo shoots in years past as well as pottery, cutting boards, and wooden bowls by many other regional craftspeople. In western Massachusetts, we understand how important it is for small businesses to support one another and *Edible* magazine realizes that they have the potential to impact those businesses by featuring their products—be it mushrooms, miso, pickles, or pottery.



When *Edible's* editorial staff thought of asking me to be an artisan-in-residence for a yearlong collaboration on all four issues, they knew I would be easy to work with and would meet deadlines. They also knew my aesthetic. I make tableware that is intentionally simple to showcase food and not visually distract from the meal. I use minimal decoration and brushwork with quiet colors, and also have a variety of glazes and styles to work with when plating food for different seasons. They were confident that my work would add value to the presentation and photography of the recipes featured in each issue.

Opened Doors

Let me rewind 20 years and tell you how I made it to the top of their list. After graduating college, I apprenticed for three years with potter Kit Cornell in Exeter, New Hampshire. By example, Kit taught me how to create community around clay and how to make a living as a potter. I first began selling my pottery at the local farmers market in Greenfield, Massachusetts, every Saturday from May to October. During those five years, I built relationships with farmers, bakers, the local food community, other craftspeople, and hundreds of customers that valued quality goods. My mailing list grew. My work became recognizable. My craftsmanship improved every year. I would say that the glacial pace of my career trajectory from emerging artist to established artist was so slow and steady that it is difficult to pinpoint

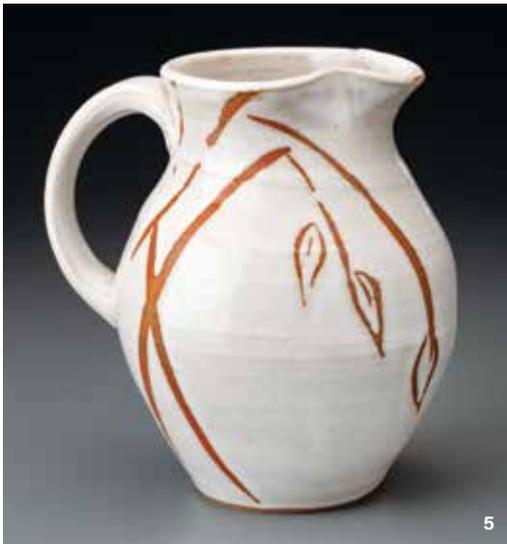
any exact milestones. However, in western Massachusetts, I have managed to establish myself as a hard-working potter and community-minded artist. Additionally, my reputation for being organized and professional has opened many doors for my career.

The Collaborative Process

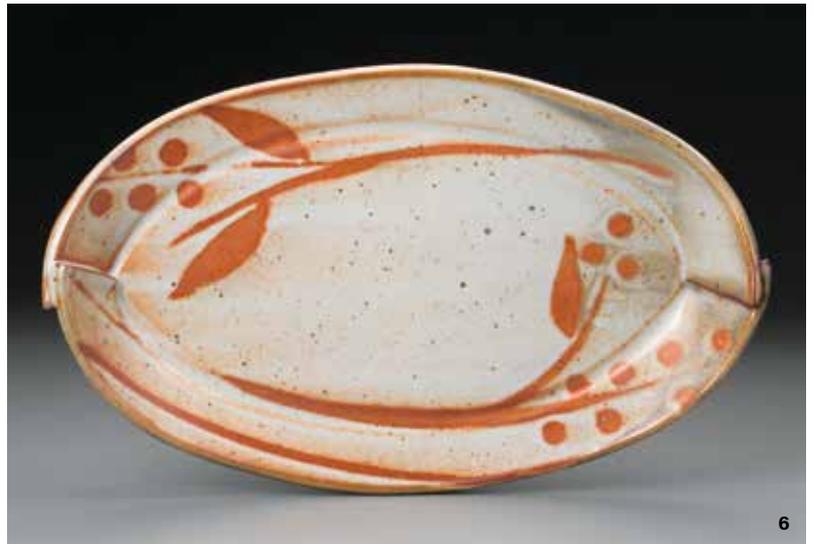
My chef collaborator and *Edible* publisher, Mary Reilly, chose a seasonal ingredient for each issue of the magazine, created several recipes, and prepared a sample of each to be photographed with my pottery. For spring, she featured eggs; summer was strawberries; fall was beans; and winter is still yet to be determined. I asked Mary for six weeks advance notice for what she might need for the next photo shoot. What had she envisioned? What colors would compliment those dishes? "Could you make a large pitcher for sangria?" she asked. She added, "I'll need a big platter, a berry bowl, of course; and that blue glaze would really pop with the strawberries!" In summer we chose white, blue, and simple wax-resist leaf patterns. For the fall she was excited to select some earthier glaze tones including yellows, rusty reds, and warm browns. Mary typically selected work for each issue from inventory I had available, but I did make sure to have a wide selection of platters, trays, bowls, and plates ready in time for each of her studio visits. She worked onsite with food photographer Dominic Perri to capture the seasonal vibe for each issue with differ-



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1 Tiffany Hilton's platter, 18 in. (46 cm) in length, handbuilt stoneware, teadust glaze, gas fired to cone 10 in reduction, 2018. Photographed for the fall 2019 issue of *Edible Pioneer Valley* by Dominic Perri, featuring Mary Reilly's bean fritters with salmoriglio sauce. 2 Plate, bowl, and mug, wheel-thrown stoneware, teadust glaze, gas fired to cone 10 in reduction, 2018. 3 Berry bowl, 8 in. (20 cm) in width, wheel-thrown stoneware, glaze, fired to cone 8 in oxidation, 2019. 4 Oval bowl, wheel-thrown and altered stoneware, teadust glaze, gas fired to cone 10 in reduction, 2018. 5 Pitcher, 9 in. (23 cm) in height, stoneware, wax resist, glaze, fired to cone 8 in oxidation, 2019. 6 Tray, 14 in. (36 cm) in length, handbuilt stoneware, wax resist, shino glaze, gas fired to cone 10 in reduction, 2018. 2-6 Photos: John Polak.

ent backgrounds, linens, and lighting. The fall photo shoot featuring my wheel-thrown and altered casserole dish was one of my favorite images. I throw these intentionally thick and add big, chunky handles so that there is no hesitation about the durability of the piece and so the user feels they have a sturdy hold on it under their potholders.

Handmade pottery can indeed encourage a more thoughtful presentation of a handcrafted meal. Both made with great care, chef and artist each infusing their expertise and love for what they do

into the dish and hoping to contribute to the experience of sharing a good meal. And truth be told, food and plates need each other.

the author *Tiffany Hilton is a full-time potter in Northampton, Massachusetts. She makes handmade dinnerware, offers wedding gift registries, and is open to collaborating with chefs and restaurants. To learn more, visit www.tiffanyhilton.com.*

Thrown and Altered Casserole

Start by throwing a bottomless ring. I use 3 pounds of clay and open it to about 11 inches wide. Pull up the wall but leave it thick for a heavy, durable casserole that will help retain heat. I leave the wall about ½ inch thick and also form a slight ramp at the bottom inside edge of the casserole to help seal up a clean seam on the inside when attaching to a slab later on (1).

Wire off the bat when the piece is soft leather hard and still very pliable. Gently alter into a rectangle, oval, or other shape and then let it stiffen up further (2).

Prepare a ¾-inch-thick slab in advance (3) and slip and score the base and walls, then attach them securely when the slab is the same consistency as the casserole wall. With a wet finger, compress the inside seam where the wall meets the slab with a swift, confident stroke (4). I use a pastry roller to compress the outside seam and bevel the bottom edge (5).

Let the dish stiffen up to firm leather hard (like parmesan cheese) and rasp (6) and rib the bottom edge to a smooth

finish. I accentuate a line around the base where I will wax up to during the glazing process (7).

Create substantial handles using more clay than you might normally start with. You want to feel these handles through your potholders and trust you have a solid hold on the dish. Start with two fat coils (8) and curve them into a slight rainbow shape. Add decorative lines (9), form the curve using a wet thumb, and cut away any extra clay (10). Press the ends in with both thumbs (11). Slip and score the attachment areas well. Once attached, push upward to give a final lift (12) and check that both handles are even in height (13).

Let the casserole dry slowly and check on it over the next few days to make sure that the handles haven't pulled away from the walls as they dry. Recompress any areas as needed with a pointy rubber or wooden tool (14). It's best to preheat the bisque firing for a few hours to ensure those chunky handles are completely dry.



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