

BEAUFORT, PORT ROYAL AND THE SEA ISLANDS

BEAUFORT

L I F E S T Y L E

**ROSS
TAYLOR**
From Garden
To Glass

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From the Field... to the Glass

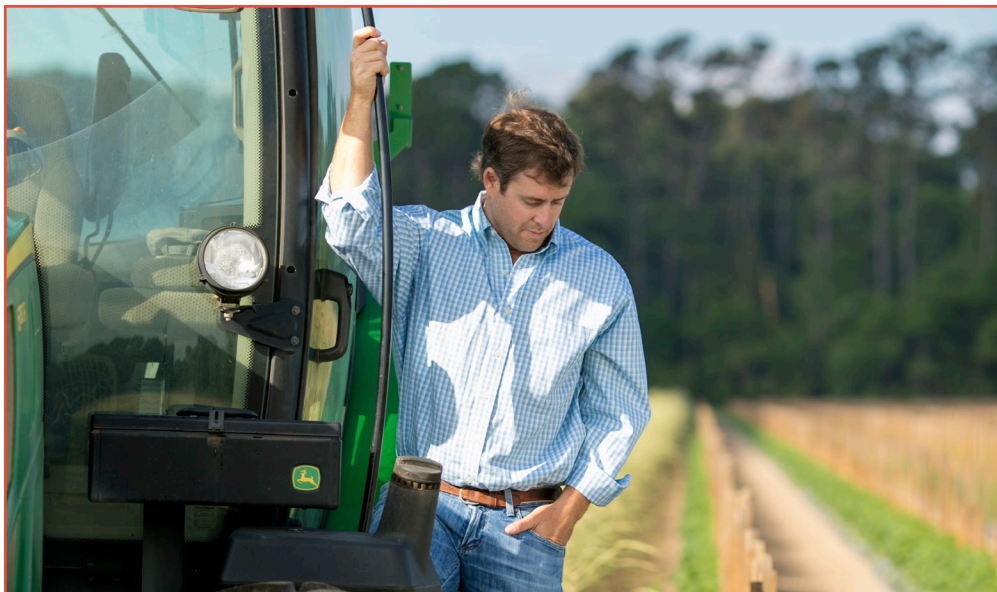
Ross Taylor: Seaside Grown's Bloody Mary Mix



“Seaside Grown’s Bloody Mary mix is made from hand-picked, vine ripe tomatoes, so fresh we can even tell you the acre of the field they came from,” says Ross Taylor, creator of St. Helena Island’s newest success story, Seaside Grown Bloody Mary Mix. Although this is their first commercial food product, Ross’s family, the Sanders, are no strangers to the tomato business. As befitting a true Beaufort story, it really starts way back when. Long time commercial farmers, the Sanders have been growing tomatoes on St. Helena Island since the early 1900s. “It all started with Gustav ‘Gus’ Sanders, who began the first commercial tomato farm in the area,” says Ross.

As their website says, “Over a century ago, Gus Sanders discovered that the soil on St. Helena Island was just right for producing plump and juicy tomatoes. That’s because the soil is just a tad bit warmer than that of inland farms, which makes it perfect for harvesting the best tomatoes. “Their longevity can be attributed to the superiority of their crop, because as Ross says, “We are known for growing the best tasting, mouthwatering tomatoes on the East Coast.”

And while that’s true, it is one thing to grow a food crop and it is quite another to create, market and sell an entirely new commercial food product. In this case, it started when Gus’s great grandson Ross was at Clemson University. Ross says, “It happened to be harvest season and my college buddies came to town - one thing led to another and that’s how our hearty and delicious Bloody Mary Mix came to be.” Ross says the secret recipe is based on a long held family recipe that just needed a few tweaks to make it shelf stable. Seaside Grown is different from most Bloody Mary mixes because it is a “real Bloody Mary mix, made from red ripe tomatoes and not tomato paste.” says Ross, “We can tell you exactly what field each tomato in any given



jar came from. We compare this to the bottling of rose wine. Not only do we know what field, we know the day and date the tomatoes in every jar of mix was picked.”

He says, “This is a family grown, handpicked, farm to table product.” People are noticing and the mix is selling out. Last October, they made 350 cases and they were sold out by December 31, 2017. Ross says, “Being certified South Carolina Grown is not just a necessary part of production. To us, it’s an honor and a matter of taste. We are blessed to be able to grow God’s finest tomato in a beautiful part of the world with our family and friends—there is truly nothing better than that. Seaside Grown Bloody Mary Mix is a natural extension of this attention to quality and pride in producing the very best product possible.”

Seaside Grown also has the added benefit of utilizing tomatoes that are too ripe, misshapen or not perfect enough to be sent to market. Ross says, “We sell, pack and ship tens of millions of pounds of tomatoes in the month of June and approximately twenty percent of the crop doesn’t make the grade. Of those, ninety percent are fine and by creating a food

product we can make use of what would otherwise go to waste.”

Their current label is fun- “One taste and we think you will agree- it’s finer than frog’s hair! If it ain’t fresh, it ain’t in our pot!” Upcoming will be a new label which will show St. Helena Island on a nautical chart because people want to know exactly where Seaside Farm, Frogmore South Carolina is located.

Ross will also be adding information on the website regarding a popular food use for the mix- using it to make local favorite Savannah Red Rice. Of course the mix can be enjoyed as a “Virgin Mary,” a non alcoholic version, as well. Future production plans include adding salsa, salsa verde and other fresh tomato products to the Seaside Grown label. First up will be “Gus’s Spicy Mix,” a Bloody Mary mix that has more of a kick to it. Ross says, “We are that rare combo, a successful commercial farm that is still small enough to create our own products. At the end of the day, we are a family grown product.”

MacDonald MarketPlace

Another family production is the



MacDonald MarketPlace, located on Sea island Parkway, St. Helena Island. Ross is the General Manager of the store, which was built by James Ross Macdonald in 1877. Although it had been in several different hands over the years, the Sanders are now running the store their ancestor founded. The MarketPlace features “Antiques, Home & Art, The Essence of Lowcountry Living” as well as the Seaside Grown line in their cozy kitchen room. Ultimately, the MacDonald Market Place brings together many local artisans, giving them a beautiful and historic space to market their work. One can find everything from local paintings to antiques, lamps to photographs and much more. It is a giant jewel box of artisan treats.

Taylor Offshore

By land and sea, Ross is also an entrepreneur in another coastal endeavor. As co-creator of Taylor Offshore, he and two other classmates from Clemson invented a quick connect system specific to off shore sport fishing rigs. Their website says it is “The easiest and fastest way to catch fish.” He says, “We spent eight years in research and development to make this the best quick release system on the market. Our product is represented all

over the world, Panama, Costa Rico, South Africa, all the big off shore locales.”

When asked why this product, he says, “Off shore fishing is very much a passion of mine. I try to go every other month.” He says his favorite off shore fishing spot is the Zane Grey Reef in Pinas Bay, Panama, “There nothing close to it!” He also likes the fishing in Los Suenos, Costa Rico.

Ross and his wife, Lisa, make their home in Beaufort. They recently celebrated their five year anniversary and Ross says although they love downtown Beaufort, they may well move out to the island in the near future. He says, “We love the peace and quiet of the island.” When asked what his favorite place in Beaufort is, this busy entrepreneur answers, “There is a creek off Station Creek on the island and it is a good place to get in the boat and be alone. That’s where I go to get away from it all. It’s quiet and beautiful out there.”

“When you mix family, six generations of tomato growers, great friends, the warm sea, summertime harvests and God’s finest tomatoes, you have just uncovered the magic behind Seaside Grown!”

Seaside Grown Bloody Mary Mix can be found at Bill’s Liquors & Fine Wine on Lady’s Island and MacDonald Marketplace on St. Helena Island.

