



## Greenwood eNewsletter Summer 2010



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Do you have news to share or an event you'd like publicized to the Greenwood community? We're always looking for ideas for the eNewsletter, so let us know about anything you'd like to see included in an upcoming edition. Just e-mail your editor at [sbergman@mnorch.org](mailto:sbergman@mnorch.org).

### From Bowings To Burgers



Greenwooders of mid-1990s vintage will probably remember Kenji Alt as a talented, brainy young violinist with a voracious appetite and a decidedly quirky sense of humor. (Your eNews editor distinctly remembers playing in one memorable quartet with him, during which time Kenji, having been informed that the Scottish composer Peter Maxwell Davies pronounces his last name "Davis," announced summarily that said composer had therefore lost the right to decide how any of his three names would be pronounced, and spent the rest of the week referring to the eminent Davies as "Machweel." This is neither here nor there, but it sticks in our head for some reason whenever we think of Kenji.)

More to the point, Kenji is a classic case of the Greenwood alum gone wild, a former camper who didn't wind up working in the music world, but who has managed to bring the creativity he once brought to chamber music to an entirely different realm. In Kenji's case, his journey began with majoring in architecture at MIT, took a swift detour into the world of food and professional cookery, and wound up with him becoming known to a peculiar and very hungry corner of the Internet as the mad scientist of burger meat.

These days, Kenji has become something of a foodie celebrity, at least to the portion of the foodie omniverse that hangs out in the blogosphere. First as a test cook for [Cooks' Illustrated](#) magazine (which produces the PBS program *America's Test Kitchen*), then as an independent food writer who contributes to several food web sites and runs his own specialty catering business out of Harlem, he has established himself as the go-to guy for getting deeply into the science behind what we eat and how we eat it. His regular column, *The Food Lab*, which runs weekly on the wildly popular *Serious Eats* site, will soon be turned into a full-length ink-and-paper cookbook by W.W. Norton & Co. It's slated for a 2012 release.

We caught up with Kenji by e-mail to ask how he made the long journey from music and architecture to deconstructing burgers and fries...

**Q: When did the whole burger obsession start, and when did it occur to you that you might be able to parlay it into a career writing about food?**

*Well, I started writing about food and food science long before I got obsessed with burgers. I've been interested in science my whole life, so it was a given that it would have some impact on my future career. When I was in college, I spent a summer working as a cook just to take a break from academics for a bit. That's what hooked me. After that, I knew that cooking was all I wanted to do. I finished off my degree in architecture while working part time at restaurants, then went straight into it full time after graduating.*

*The writing started because after several years of the restaurant lifestyle, it became too much for me. I missed my friends and family and weekends and holidays, so I applied for a job at Cook's Illustrated, and that's where the food science writing really took off. I became known as the in-house food science expert there. When I moved to New York, I figured - I've got a unique set of skills in that I have lots of cooking experience, I have an analytical, scientific approach to thinking about things, and after having worked as a magazine editor for three years (at a magazine that obsesses over reader feedback), I'm really well-tuned to the types of things that people like to eat, and like to read about. So I combined those elements and came up with the Food Lab*

*I became obsessed with burgers three years ago when I ate at the [legendary NYC burger joint] [Shake Shack](#) for the first time and realized that small, classic American fast-food style burgers can be incredible. The burger there is very much inline with the type of stuff I work on. It's not gourmet, it's not high-end, there's nothing fancy about it, but it's just a simple, down-to-earth, classic dish that through careful thought and good technique, has been taken to a new level. That's really my whole thing - potato salad, macaroni and cheese, hamburgers, all those simple foods are much more exciting than they appear, and can be every bit as good and interesting as flashy restaurant food with fancy ingredients - even more so, because simple ingredients rely so much on technique. You just need to think about them in a different way.*

**Q: Got a favorite Greenwood meal you care to mention?**

*That's a really tough one. Definitely pesto day is up near the top of my list. I must've eaten five plates of the stuff in an eating contest one year (I believe Yves Dharamraj was the other contestant). (Editor's note: Yes, he was. It was disgusting.) I remember once Rebeccah Reich asked Glen to make "spicy green beans the way my mom makes them," and those were fantastic. I think they were similar to Sichuan-style dry fried green beans, with a spicy chili-garlic sauce. Those were so good I actually made them at home the week after Greenwood ended. It was probably the first thing I ever cooked for myself that involved skills beyond toast. Having the garden at Greenwood where we grew peas and going to pick blackberries at Glenn's place was great too. It's wonderful that he cares enough about the quality of the food there to get campers involved in projects like that. Greenwood is lucky.*

**Q: Do you still play your violin at all?**

*I still play the violin on occasion, though not as much as I'd like to. I've recently got back in touch with Anil Melwani who hosts chamber music parties at his apartment in NY occasionally, so I'm definitely going to start getting involved with that. Nothing better than Zilching! I've branched out a bit and I do play the guitar pretty much every day. Nothing serious, just playing around and occasionally jamming with friends.*

You can find Kenji's food writing in various places online. Here are the links to get you to his particular brand of cooking/eating madness...

[The Food Lab @ Serious Eats](#)  
[The Food Lab on Facebook](#)  
[Goodeater.org](#)  
[KA Cuisine](#)

## Greenwooders In The News

Several notable Greenwood folk who now play in professional quartets have been making quite a racket in the New York press this summer, albeit in very different ways. First the good news: the Brooklyn Rider quartet (including brothers and Greenwood alums Colin & Eric Jacobsen,) which we've written about in past newsletters, has been invited to play a full set of music this September at the U.S. Open tennis championship in Queens! Cable news channel NY1 produced a fun piece on the group after the announcement - we can't embed the video, but you can [watch it here...](#)



Chiara Quartet cellist and senior camp faculty member Greg Beaver (*pictured at right*) wasn't so happy to make the headlines, but made the most of a chance to get the word out about the increasing difficulty of bringing musical instruments onto commercial airplanes in the US. [As reported by the New York Post](#), Beaver purchased a separate ticket to bring his cello on a flight from Denver to New York, as he and thousands of other cellists have been doing for decades, but was refused permission to board the plane at the gate unless he purchased a first-class ticket. Beaver pointed out that he'd flown with his cello in coach on the same airline (even on the same model of plane!) weeks earlier, and eventually even offered to pay for a second coach seat, but United Airlines turned him down flat. For what it's worth, that first-class seat would have cost \$1052, or nearly as much as *five* coach seats on the same flight.

The American Federation of Musicians has been lobbying Congress to force airlines to adopt a standardized set of guidelines for carrying instruments on commercial flights, and there's a petition on the AFM's web site intended to show support for the measure. If you'd like to sign it, [here's the link](#) - you need not be a union member, or even a professional musician, to sign.

## Join Us At The Barn!

There's still time for you to catch a Greenwood concert this summer! Here are the remaining concert dates in both the Senior and Junior Camp schedules:

**Senior Camp** - July 31, 7:30pm; August 7, 3pm and 7:30pm; August 8, 10am (Choral concert at Cummington Church) & 3pm (Orchestra concert at the Barn)

**Junior Camp** - August 21, 7:15pm; August 29, 11am

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We hope you find these newsletters fun to read and contribute to, but we realize that not everyone may want to receive them. If you would like to opt out of receiving future editions of the newsletter, send an e-mail to [Raymah Hutchinson](mailto:Raymah.Hutchinson) with "unsubscribe Greenwood newsletter" in either the subject line or body of the message.



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