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**THE FARM:** Deb and Jim Crum of [Crum’s Heirlooms](https://crumsheirloomskc.weebly.com/)

**LOCATION:** Bonner Springs, Kan.

**FEATURED INGREDIENTS:** Turnips, sweet onions, fresh herbs, hyssop, garlic scapes and borage.

Birds chirp, butterflies dive on humid summer air and a Red Heeler named Jed leads the way to the onion patch.

“I finally got my mojo back for growing onions,” farmer Jim Crum says as Fox and Pearl Chef/Owner Vaughn Good and Chef de Cuisine Arlo Riley begin to pull yellow Sweet Candy and Texas Super Sweet bulbs from the ground.

Sweet onions may seem like a simple, straight-forward crop, but like the layers within they are deceptively complex and prone to attack by pests and disease. The farmer typically handles each bulb up to five times in the process of planting, harvesting, drying and delivering to a chef.

Kate Frick and Stephanie Marchesi, owners of Tonganoxie’s Myers Hotel and part-time farmhands, pick up the onion bundles and ferry them by tractor to drying racks beside a red barn reconstructed after an EF-4 tornado hit the Crum’s property in May 2019.

Jim and Deb Crum started Crum’s Heirlooms in 2002 because Jim wanted to grow heirloom tomatoes in retirement. Their 10-acre family farm grows 37 varieties of heirloom tomatoes. Some varieties they grow are listed on the Slow Food Ark of Taste, including Cherokee Purples, German Pinks and Orange Oxheart.

“I just started messing with heirloom seeds and it just kind of got out of hand,” Jim says.

A decade later, the couple is delivering to nearly 40 chef-driven restaurants in Kansas City and Lawrence, Kan. Chef Vaughn began a partnership with the Crum’s when he opened Hank Charcuterie in Lawrence. He needed large amounts of cucumbers for pickling. After the Lawrence Farmers Market each Saturday, Jim would trade leftover produce for Chef Vaughn’s famous artisan sausages and a relationship was forged.

“I like working with the different personalities,” Jim says of the farm’s restaurant clientele. “What’s kind of unique to me is that you grow something unusual – like radicchio or escarole –and they can figure out what to do with it.”

While touring the farm, the chefs taste wild purslane leaves with a salty flavor similar to spinach and yellow fennel flowers that mimic licorice before gathering a bouquet of purple hyssop wafting a minty aroma.

“I really like putting flowers on plates. They have more interesting flavors than just herbs, and I think the microgreen thing is played out,” Chef Vaughn says.

Back at Fox and Pearl’s signature custom hearth, Chef Vaughn divides the coals of a glowing fire. He takes turnips and slices the tops off, places them in a wire basket, tosses with a sheen of oil and roasts the cream-colored orbs between glowing coals.

He repeats the process with whole sweet onions, placing them in a cast-iron skillet which he moves from low to high positions in the hearth to control the temperature.

“I am a big fan of a philosophy of building flavor. Each step in the cooking process is an opportunity to impact flavor and put your own personal touch on it,” Chef Vaughn says a few minutes later as he rubs away some of the char on the vegetables with a clean kitchen towel.

Fermented turnips are added to the coal-roasted onions and turnips and the mixture is bathed in butter. The vegetables accompany a Barham Family Farm pork chop that Chef Vaughn has brined, cold smoked and finished over the fire. Before the plate goes to a Fox and Pearl diner, the plate is finished with compound butter flecked with grassy garlic scapes and sprinkled with tiny flowers of hyssop and borage.

“I have always used char on meat and vegetables, but I think there is a way different flavor profile and deepness that comes from using real wood in a hearth,” he says.

**THE DISH:** Barham Family Farms (Kearney, Mo.) pork chop with Crum Heirloom’s coal roasted turnips and sweet onions, hyssop and borage.

**INGREDIENT DECONSTRUCTION**

**Hyssop:** Hyssop is a slightly bitter evergreen herb in the mint family. It’s typically used to flavor food and beverages, such as chartreuse liqueur, and it is sometimes used in folk medicine.

**Borage:** A European herb, borage has a flavor reminiscent of cucumbers. Both the flowers and hairy leaves are edible, although the leaves must be finely chopped to avoid an unpleasant mouthfeel.

**Garlic scapes:** The tender, green shoots growing from hardneck garlic plants are called garlic scapes. If left unharvested the scape tendrils will flower. Farmers typically removed to avoid draining energy from the bulb. Scapes are less fiery than raw garlic cloves. The grassier flavor notes mean they are most often minced or pureed to be used in raw, like compound butter or pesto.