

TIDBITS

HOLMSTED FINES CHUTNEY

Birmingham company blends Southern produce into an ancient condiment.

WORDS ALLISON SALERNO PHOTOS MANDY BUSBY PHOTOGRAPHY



Holmsted Fines uses farm-fresh produce in its chutneys. Above right: Creator and founder Rebecca Williamson



For those looking for shortcuts in their home kitchens, chutney might be the new secret weapon. So says Rebecca Williamson of Birmingham, who is spreading the gospel of the world's oldest condiment through her apple-based chutneys, sold under the label Holmsted Fines and inspired by the flavors of the South. Her chutney varieties include ingredients such as Georgia-grown peaches and green tomatoes.

Many Americans are unaccustomed to the sweet-and-sour flavor of chutney, which is basically a fruit relish with vinegar and spices added. But it is a staple of English kitchens; it's as common a condiment across the pond as ketchup or strawberry jelly is here.

"It's one of the only condiments that can go on vegetables, cheese, meats, desserts and even in cocktails," Williamson says. (Yes, really, cocktails! Try making the peach chutney–bourbon cocktail, below.) You can dollop it on a cheese board or in a sweet potato casserole. No time to marinate? Just add a flavor-packed chutney to your fish or meat after cooking. "Roast or bake as usual and then all you have to do is top it with chutney."

Chutney's origins are the Indian subcontinent, where it is served as an accompaniment to plain rice and as a dip for breads. Historians say chutney, which is the Anglicized version of the Hindi word *chatni*, is more than 1,500 years old.

British colonists took the condiment home from India in the 18th century, but it didn't really catch on until World War II, when the government encouraged food rationing. The Ministry of Food, which oversaw rationing, even issued a recipe for homemade green tomato chutney so gardeners could make the most of their unripe tomatoes or of vegetables at expiration's edge.

Williamson grew fond of chutney while doing humanitarian work in the West Sussex countryside of England. (Her company's name comes from the local Holmsted Manor.) She then perfected her own recipe for green tomato chutney while studying at Le Cordon Bleu in London, and returned to the South and settled in Birmingham in 2006. She founded Holmsted Fines in 2013 and has since expanded her chutney's repertoire by adding peach, balsamic vinegar–red onion and apple–jalapeño varieties.

Stanley Sistrunk, owner of The Flower Store, a home décor shop in Auburn, says Holmsted Fines has hooked his customers on chutney. "Evidently," he says. "We sold out." 🍯

Holmsted Fines: holmstedfines.com

THE JACQUE

Serves 2

- 2 Tbsp. peach chutney
- 6 oz. bourbon
- 1 oz. simple syrup or
- 1 Tbsp. agave sweetener
- Juice from half a lemon
- 2 sprigs of mint (reserve 1 for garnish)
- Club soda
- Ginger beer

Fill a cocktail shaker with ice and combine the first five ingredients. Shake well for 30 seconds. Pour into two cocktail glasses filled with ice. Top with equal portions of club soda and ginger beer. Garnish with an additional mint sprig.