

Frank gets to root of preservation

By Samantha Fields, Townsman Staff
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For people living in Iowa, New Hampshire and maybe even South Carolina, finding a politician on the doorstep has probably started to feel almost routine. Here in Massachusetts, though, politicians rarely make house calls. But last Friday, Congressman Barney Frank, D-4th, stopped by Lorne and Susan Jones' Avon Road home to meet the couple and learn about their fledgling business.

Root Cellar Preserves, which the Joneses run out of their kitchen, is a unique concept. Inspired by the plight of smaller New England towns that don't have the money to put into preserving historical homes and buildings, Susan and Lorne came up with the idea of selling preserves — primarily pickles — and donating half the proceeds to local historic preservation projects.

"We grew up pickling, and we love pickles as a family," said Susan. "We realized that there wasn't anything out there like we had as kid, like what our families made." So somehow the idea of preserves — pickles, and preserving historical buildings — came together, and the Jones' thought, "wouldn't it be kind of interesting to pair the two? We think they meld nicely."



By Kate Flock

Congressman Barney Frank talks with Susan and Lorne Jones about their business, Root Cellar Preserves. They put half of the proceeds from their products towards preserving historic homes and structures in New England.

Having grown up in rural upstate New York, where historical structures dot the landscape, historical preservation "is close to our heart," Lorne said. "Old houses are part of the culture here. They are an asset of New England, and are part of what makes us different from the rest of the country."

Though still very much a small business, Root Cellar Preserves is in a period of dynamic growth and change. In recent months, the business was certified by the state as a woman-owned business, and the Joneses signed on with a distributor who will put their product in Whole Foods chains throughout the region. They are also engaging in discussions with Roche Bros. in hopes of placing their product in the Wellesley branch. To date, Root Cellar Preserves products can be found in 40 gourmet shops throughout the state.

"Fall is always so busy for us," said Susan, who is using her brief down time to focus on two new goals: getting Root Cellars products into chain grocery stores, and developing new recipes. The line is currently made up of seven products — four different types of pickles, ratatouille, corn relish and salsa. Next up is a recipe they are developing for spiced beets, which they are hoping will be popular. More will likely follow. Recently, Susan said, "a woman contacted us and said, 'I have some recipes passed down from my grandmother that I think you'd like.'"

As word has gotten out about their mission, more people have begun to contact them, not only with recipes, but with suggestions for other projects they might be interested in supporting. Currently, Root Cellar Preserves is supporting two projects: the Dadmun-McNamara house on Washington Street, which is home to the Wellesley Historical Society, and the Draper House in Dover. Eventually, though, the Joneses hope to expand their business enough so that they can begin taking on other projects.



By Kate Flock

Products from Susan and Lorne Jones' business Root Cellar Preserves..

Frank, who "visits a lot of local companies," accepted the Jones' invitation to come learn about their business because "it's important to know what's going on in the district economically," he said. "A lot of growth comes from small companies that start small and grow ... and the tie-in with historical preservation is not just a cultural impact, it's got an economic impact."

During his Friday morning visit to Avon Road, Frank told Susan and Lorne that he would "keep an eye out" and "start talking to people" about different ways to spread the word about Root Cellar Preserves, and its mission. "We will pursue this, and if we hear about any buildings we'll get directly in touch with you."