

the CORNBREAD MAN of SELMA P.88 | SECRETS of a FRENCH BAKER P.94

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★  
*Texas Pete  
chicken biscuit  
from Krankies in  
Winston-Salem.*

PROSPECT

# The Water Shed

MG3 Farms' hand-built hydroponic greenhouse offers a warm place for plants to flourish during winter's freeze.



Roderick McMillan's 300-foot-long greenhouse can hold more than 50,000 plants, which are kept warm in the winter by a wood furnace.

**T**HE GREENHOUSE feels futuristic. Rows of bright green plants sit stacked on top of one another, sprouting out of white pipes that zigzag across the narrow building. Spaceship aesthetics aside, hydroponic farming is very much an innovation of the present: no soil necessary, just a seed planted into a sterile foam cube. Sunshine and a steady stream of nutrient-rich water do the rest. Roderick McMillan, the 27-year-old creator of MG3 Farms in Prospect, says the plants never want for anything. The results are beautiful:

Glossy strawberry leaves float over the aisles, and curly oakleaf lettuce blooms in bunches as soft as suede. McMillan comes from a family of traditional farmers going back four generations. He's always enjoyed working in agriculture, but he wanted to try something new. He was drawn to the cleanliness and efficiency of hydroponics, which create a difference in quality that people can really taste, McMillan says. So he converted an old tobacco transplant greenhouse into a hydroponic greenhouse by watching YouTube videos and enlisting aid from his

family. Today, going on its third year, the greenhouse cuts a distinctive figure amid the fields of corn, wheat, and soybeans on the McMillan family farmland in Robeson County. Heated in the winter and cooled in the summer, the greenhouse grows lettuce, herbs, tomatoes, strawberries, and cabbage year-round, producing fresh and flavorful greens even when the ground outside is dusted with snow. — *Piper Anderson*

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