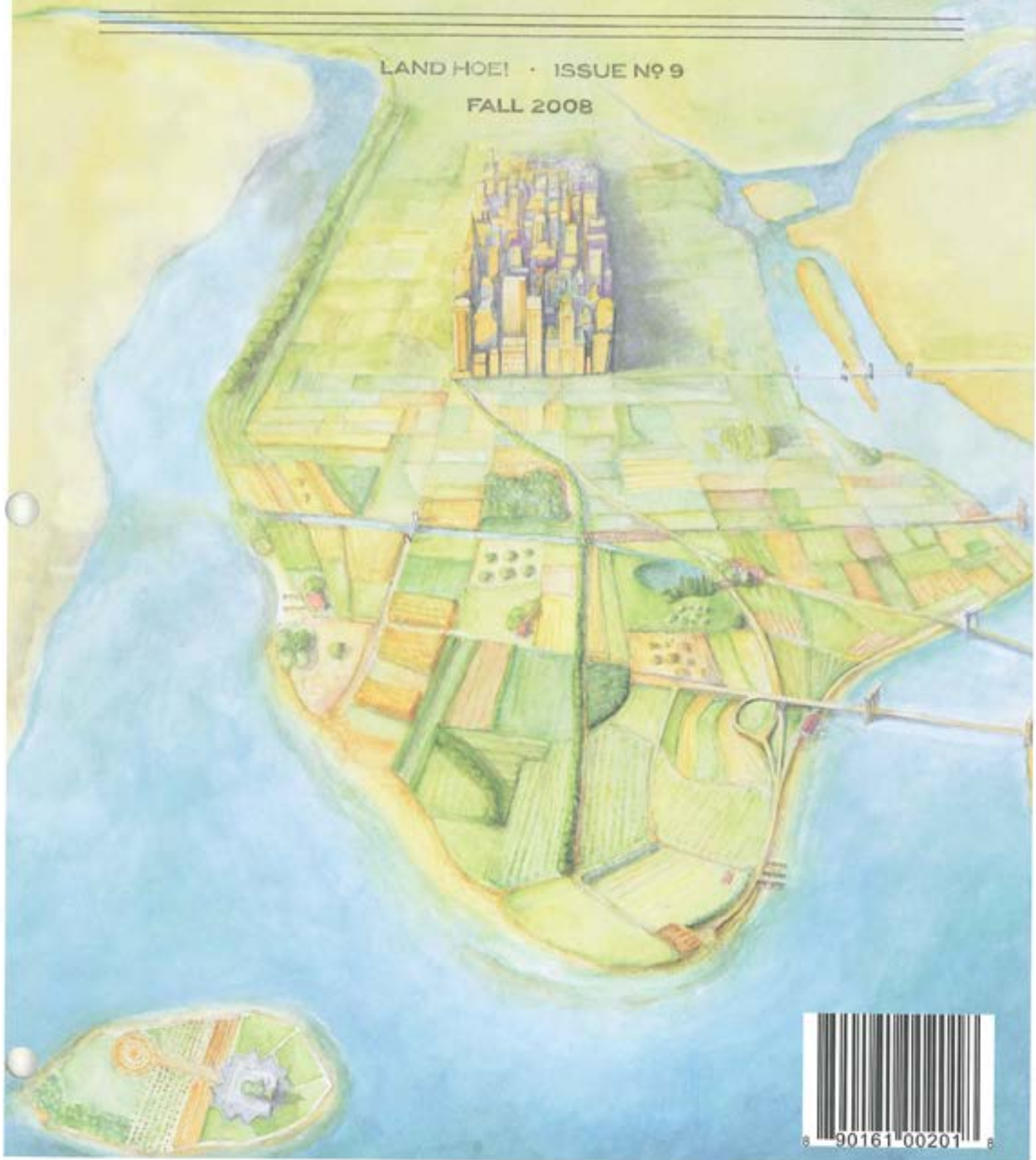


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This Must Be The Place

Mostly we stand on it. Sometimes we till it, or build our shelters on it. What I hope to develop this Fall is a stronger need for us as human beings to be in direct contract with our land. One incarnation of this hunger would be informed consumerism, buying things from people who have their hands in the proverbial plot. I would like people to be inspired to search and look while we travel back to the land. I believe the answers to life's mysterious and meaningful questions are hidden in the grass. I can remember walking a suburban sidewalk at around the age of seven. The worms in between the uneven pavement parcels fascinated me and with pieces of twig I would take the worms and cut them in half and watch them separate and writhe away in two directions. I was fascinated by this nature. This boyish moment was one of my only interactions with bugs growing up.

My home was climate controlled and hermetically sealed from the outside world. We deployed small groups of gardeners and exterminators to make sure there were no bugs and no weeds. In my antiseptic home I experienced no yearning; however I knew somewhere deep that this was not the world I wanted to live in and I was going to have to look for what was missing in my life. I spent many years searching paintings and art for something to flint this spark. This quest, or perhaps meandering might be a better term, led me to Africa at the age of twenty-two. I was looking for something pre-industry, something primitive, something less concrete. In hindsight I feel I was looking for an existence rudimentary and basic. Water, dirt and food. People and community.

I did not realize, and here maybe I mean something more like actualize, all these important components to the equation until ten years later when we opened a restaurant. We started to seek out farmers for food for the restaurant. Meeting these people gave me real insight into the economic relationship we bargain in. I think it's important that as consumers we are making choices with our money. We have choices. We can buy from somewhere else. We can seek out a better product, one that is responsibly raised and thoughtful, one that is deliberate. Meaning I have really tried to steward the money that is earned daily at the restaurant directly to the producer's hand, the hand that tended and the hand that toiled. This is an especially gratifying transaction when you feel like you are supporting those who steward our health, our well-being, our land. Farmers are our new doctors.

There is another character in this equation that can only be fully realized by taking a different sort of action. It stirs up something that is more spiritual. It happened to me when I first put a seed, a fennel seed, into the earth and three short months later out came something I was able to eat. The first time I experienced this I felt a sense of joy and self-sufficiency, which I think, dare I say, completes us as human beings. It connects us back to our roots, to a time and to a place when we had to grow our own food. Here there is also a simplicity and complexity that is unique. From a small seed with latent information pushed into the ground will sprout up a large plant that will produce food for you and sustain us as beings on this planet. I marvel at this magical exploit of nature.

Gravity keeps us here but I believe that similar to a seed there is latent gene in all of us calling us back. I don't believe we would hold it with such wonderment if it didn't somehow tug on our internal strings. It has been said that one of our fascinations as Americans with the front lawn is somehow our searching for the grasslands of Africa. As humans I think we want to all connect back to this place that is basic where the rules are set by the elements of this earth. Water, sun and dirt - by Andrew Tarlow

Josh Wilton

POPULAR MECHANICS



BY LEAH CAMPBELL

HERE IS SOMETHING GROWING IN BROOKLYN. AN ORGANIC VEGETABLE GARDEN SPROUTS IN THE LONG, 950-SQUARE-FOOT FRONT YARD OF THE AUTOMOTIVE HIGH SCHOOL IN WILLIAMSBURG. IT'S VISIBLE THROUGH THE SCHOOL'S WROUGHT-IRON GATES, AND PEOPLE OFTEN STOP TO SEE WHAT'S STRETCHING THROUGH THE BARS. IS THAT REALLY CALENDULA? COULD THAT FLORET BE BROCCOLI? JENNY KESSLER, WHO TEACHES SOPHOMORE ENGLISH AND MIXED LEVEL ESL AT AUTOMOTIVE HIGH SCHOOL, HAS PUT INTO PRACTICE A BEAUTIFUL IDEA — TO CULTIVATE THE MINDS OF STUDENTS BY HELPING THEM TO CULTIVATE THE EARTH AROUND THEM. TOGETHER THEY HAVE TURNED A STRETCH OF SPACE, WHICH HAD SEEMED TO BE TOO NARROW FOR ANYTHING BUT WEEDS AND SPARSE BUSHES, INTO A VERDANT AND PRODUCTIVE GARDEN.

The school appreciates the positive feedback it's received since the beautification of its front lawn, but a quieter benefit of the work saturates the lives of the people there. When a janitor, interested in Kessler's gardening, chatted her up on his love of chard, she brought him some a few days later.

On the day I visit in early July, bees graze on the young plants as Kessler takes me around the place. She moves through the vegetable beds, bending to lift heavy zucchini blossoms and check the dwindling aphid infestation on twinned, nearby leaves. Kessler, you can tell, used to be a farmer. And then about three years ago, when she couldn't find a farm to work on, she began to teach English at Automotive High School, home of the Pistons. Auto, as it's called by the people here, touts its curriculum as the only one of its kind; it delivers both a high school diploma and full NATEF (National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation) certification. Each semester teachers propose electives to be available to juniors and seniors, which are then put to a vote. The students elect the courses they would like to take, and the top ranking ones come to fruition. These electives have included such varying themes as the medieval con-

cept of the hero, Spike Lee and West Indian literature.

"Ultimately, what I wanted to do was food justice," affirmed Kessler. Food Justice — a familiar phrase on the slow food junket — is the aim of activists who hold the conviction that access to healthy food is a basic human right. Kessler began to formulate a curriculum of her own with pioneers in mind; she credits Alice Waters, who in 1995, co-founded Edible Schoolyard at Martin Luther King Junior Middle School in Berkeley, California. The program ripped up an acre of concrete, put down topsoil, and never looked back. Their concept of "seed to table" takes learning from the garden to the kitchen.

Kessler also cites as an inspiration the nearby efforts of Added Value, a Red Hook, Brooklyn based organization devoted to sustainable development and supporting young leaders since 2001. In a neighborhood with a paucity of grocery options and three quarters of the population under the poverty level, the organization employs local teens to work 2.75 rescued acres, growing and selling produce back to the community. Co-founders Ian Marvy and Michael Hurwitz focus on the triple bottom line, or the economic, social and environmental impact of their program. Their "seed to sale" initiative has shown

how well-versed they are in the language of youth empowerment. In her second year at Auto, Kessler proposed her class Food, Land and You to be added to the curriculum. Even without a firm understanding of what it would cover and what students would do in a class about food, the assistant principal put it on the ballot. Students voted her class into the curriculum, and over the past three semesters, about 60 students have taken the class. But at the time, Kessler recalled feeling a mixture of elation and terror.

"I was really excited about the prospects, but knew I would have to put together a whole curriculum, and that it would have to be engaging for an entire semester. If it wasn't successful, everything would fall on me. I also knew there was a lot of legwork — raising funds for the garden and for field trips to farms, making contacts, and exploring the abundant resources and possibilities in New York... I already knew that my students were capable of everything they've done; my worry was that I wouldn't be able to bring it out of them or engage them enough. I was wrong."

On the first day of classes, in the fall of 2007, Kessler placed a cherry tomato and a Cheeto on each student's desk and asked them if they could tell her where each of them came from — illuminating how little we often know about the origin, process and journey of our food. Each semester since, she has begun by posing this question with similar results. "They don't have much to say. I write some more specifics on the board — to get them to understand what I mean; what's in it, where did it come from, and how did it get to you? And they begin to throw out key ideas — like factory, truck, corn, cheese, etc. I just have to keep asking questions to make them realize that the orange powder on a cheeto is far more complicated than 'cheese.' This lesson usually takes us at least a week. By the end, they've learned the steps of the food system, and we've visually mapped out the steps for each item. They can see how much more energy, money, oil, advertising, and factories are involved in the processed item."

It's in these moments that learning about food becomes a conduit for conveying lessons about what it is to learn and to teach in the first place. "As a third-year teacher, I'm still shaping my teaching philosophy. First and foremost, I am responsible for giving my students the skills they need and improving their reading and writing. That responsibility is incorporated into everything I do. But on a larger scale, I try to focus on three main

goals in the classroom: critical thinking and questioning, hope and belief — in themselves and in their futures — and exposure. I want my students to be exposed to as much as possible, to know how big the world is and the opportunities that abound in it. I want them to understand different ways of life and different ways of thinking, to know others' struggles and successes, and to be able to draw parallels between themselves and people on the other side of the world."

The first semester was harder than the second. Students were skeptical that they might really be able to talk about food for a whole semester; the garden was not very productive in winter months. And deeper issues tested the class as they faced a curriculum shot through with the spectral images of a malnourished nation. With nearly 80% of Auto's student body qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch, Kessler recognizes that her lessons on the drawbacks of a corporate system that churns out cheap and available food can be a hard sell. "I know they can feel bombarded with negative information." She understands that most teenagers don't control choices about what they eat. And, moreover, those food choices come down to greater issues of economics, power.

It's about negotiation. Kareem Beale, one of the students in the first semester of the class, said, "As a kid growing up around meat and all, for me to change is hard. But, you know, I'm eating organic, so right now I'm sticking with meat." He took the class because "it was the only one available in my time slot," but the discussions got him thinking, especially about who has access to what kind of food and why. "And you know, some of the prices — ridiculous. I don't have 20 dollars for a chicken. I don't think anyone else in the community does either."

To the grim realities of the current food system, the class's garden serves as a foil. Growing their own vegetables in seemingly infertile soil means for some their first time eating, let alone planting, these vegetables. In the burgeoning garden, an alternative — an increasingly sustainable alternative — begins to take shape. While we talk, Beale remembers the plants he worked with almost a year ago, looking upward like he's ducking in and out of a memory, "And lavender, I remember the lavender. Do we still have that? Oh yeah, that looks like it needs some watering."

Kessler understands. "Food is something that unites everyone on the plan-

et, and most of us in the developed world are so incredibly removed from our food. I still think it's a small miracle when I lift a leaf and find a cucumber, or pull a soybean off the stem. This elation never fades, even after years of growing food."

In July, the garden was ripe with calendula, carrots, peas, soy beans, arugula, beets, celery, squash, tomatoes, catnip, eggplant, fledgling raspberries, basil, okra, really hot but sweet peppers, cucumbers, watermelon, red cabbage, sage, strawberries and sunflowers. Of the group of sunflowers that faces the street, Kessler laughed, "I honestly don't know how it got there. I just saw this plant coming up and let it grow."

It's this flexibility that seems one of Kessler's best traits. When Cornell University tested the soil three years ago and gave recommendations about what to add to augment the 4.5% of organic matter, Kessler made do.

"We didn't have the time or the money to buy the amendments. Instead, I bought a bunch of two dollar bags of manure and organic topsoil from Home Depot and added that every time we started a bed. So far, so good!" She remembers throwing together the garden during short class periods. The bell would ring as they labored over a new broccoli bed, and she would yell, "Just shove them in! Shove them in anywhere!" She and her students would hurry in a kind of imprecise exactitude, making it happen as best they could and hoping things would grow. There's still a kind of disbelief that their hard work has come to fruition. They had just sold their first produce to Urban Rustic the day before I visited. Kessler marveled, "They're selling our lettuce for four bucks!"

While people at Auto are just discovering the economic, albeit modest, worth of their efforts, there are others who garden out of the remainders of economic desperation linked to cars. The city of Detroit, Michigan, a city in many ways left behind by the automotive industry, has shrunk to less than half its size since 1950. In these past decades, the American car, a symbol of wealth, leisure and freedom — and the lifeblood of Detroit — has come undone. The domestic automotive industry now kneels to foreign suppliers who put out cheaper imports, even while it struggles to pay the rising cost of pensions and health care for a unionized work force. It isn't going well. As Motor City's population shrinks, its tracts of land have become

a sprawling food desert. Yet reclamation of the city's vacant lots and corners into some 300 gardens in the last decade has caught the attention of a nation that knew Detroit for its assembly lines and not its vegetable rows.

When I ask Kessler if there isn't some irony in gardening at a school connected to an industry as notoriously un-environmentally friendly as automobiles, she rejoins, "Gardening should never be pigeon-holed — to a certain kind of person or place or institution. We all eat, and everything we eat comes from the ground in one way or another. In my opinion, every school and every home should be growing some of their food, so it makes perfect sense... As a technical school, we need to prepare our students in the technologies of the future, and 'green jobs' will be a huge part of this. I would argue that for graduating students being well-versed in the language and technologies of 'sustainability' should be an obligation. The garden and the surrounding curriculum helps prepare our students for jobs in the current economy."

As Auto opens its doors for the 2008-09 school year, the students who continue to work on the garden want to do more with the community and expand to the garden to the back of the school, where tires and old cans of potatoes used to litter the ground. Kessler is considering how best to tie their work in the garden to the CTE (Career and Technical Education) department. Together, they hope to write a four-year curriculum and "Sustainable Earth" program in addition to the current CTE programs of Automotive Technology and Business. It's not a stretch — one of the other classes has converted a turbo diesel Mercedes Benz to partially run on vegetable oil. Kessler tells me that she's considering loading it up with produce and taking it to neighborhoods that wouldn't otherwise have access to those vegetables, like the People's Grocery does out in Oakland. Beale perks up at the idea. "Really?" He thinks a while as Kessler and I talk. Then he jumps in, "What if we introduce the idea of vegetable oil from our garden...use 'em if anything spoils?"

Kessler smiles in appreciation of a really good idea. "You know, Kareem, you're right." She turns to me, "So, we're thinking about that."

Esthan Cornell

STRANGE CARGO

WRITTEN BY ANDREW RUMPLEY

I had been walking among the silent cars for some time, tracing and retracing my steps through the salvage yard, scanning colors for something I had missed. The small birds that hovered above taking turns diving into the thicket could have told me what ground I had or had not covered. I was glad they were my only witness. In truth I had cut enough already. An '84 Subaru the color of a camel had been the last.

I had come to think of each panel as a sort of hide, removed and lying beside the steel carcass from which it had been peeled. Unlike the leviathans they resembled these things were not slain so much as they had just grown old and died. I was there to collect the skins before they rotted. Triumphant I headed back to the small office.

"Do you want something for the juice?" I asked.

The small room felt cool to me in comparison to the sprawling open landscape of the yard. The low counter separating us was clad in well worn sixteen-gauge stainless. It was the right height I imagined for receiving heavy objects from downwardly extended arms. The sign outside read we buy and sell and the surface was built for it. As for what I was buying, it wouldn't even see the inside of this room.

"How much could you have used?" one of the men said, not expecting an earnest answer.

"I don't know. I was out there for a while, and that angle grinder draws 10 amps... and through 300 feet of cord, probably..." I drifted off, not knowing the first thing about how amps convert into kilowatts.

Hoping to press honesty into the unusual conversation, I just stated what I knew to be true. We were laying the ground rules at that moment, and I knew that each word would impact future dealings at the yard.

"Forget it kid. What did you end up taking?"

"I took the four roofs I said I would, two hoods, and two trunks. I didn't take anything off the Plymouth, but I might next time."

I was happy to be off the topic of power use, and happier about the answer. The man that wasn't talking looked at me and the back of the muffler catalogue the other man was scribbling numbers on. He smiled a little, partly because of the nature of this particular transaction and because it was just about time to go home. The cord, grinder, shear, cold chisel and pry-bars were all piled around at my feet. I wasn't standing as straight as I had been earlier and my hands, I noticed, weren't operating normally as I tried to count out a few bills.

"Let's call it two even. That's just for the hoods and trunks. I can't do anything with them roofs anyway."

I knew going into it I wouldn't be asked to pay for the hoods. Salvage yards only collect on the roofs when they crush the cars, and they weren't ready to crush any of these. Cars from the 60s and 70s yield parts that to the right customer are worth a good amount. I liked them because the steel was heavier gauge and the paint had a better patina to it. I did, on an earlier visit to the yard, offer to pay for roofs, but this approach turned out to be a nonstarter. There was no system in place for selling roofs, and a twenty-five year old wasn't going to change that in a few visits. So I bought the trunks and hoods to make the deal sweet, but for me they were less than ideal. These parts have too many creases and curves and are much harder to "skin." For making cabinets I wanted roofs.

How had I arrived at this place, hauling from it such strange cargo? I was only just starting to understand. That was 1994.

Five or so years earlier I was preparing for the inevitable ejection from the warm nest of academia into the unknown. My school experience had been a sort of rough patch in most respects: my work was rarely finished for critiques, I constantly argued with my professors and in my last semester abandoned furniture design for another, only tangentially related discipline. The problem, if I could narrow it to one, was that I had formed two contradictory notions about being a designer.

Design has a purity of purpose due to its common association with utility. I had learned that if one understands a problem completely upon setting out to create an object, an elegant solution will be born from the process. It was process, so unlike what I thought creativity to be, that drew me in. At the same time I became somewhat obsessed with what for me was an entirely new kind of making. This involved lathes, milling machines, surface grinders, micrometers and a long list of other mechanical wonders from the mid-twentieth century. The industrial design experience was the candy which I happily spent all of my allowance on in the form of valuable time.

The problem with the pursuit of design for me was not creative. I disagreed with my peers on issues of aesthetics, but these were minor issues compared to what a few of us were talking about. Reports on rising levels of greenhouse gases, overflowing landfills, and ground water contamination were just beginning to weave into conversations. It wasn't difficult for me to connect dots from these horrors back to manufacturers, the engineers and the designer. I soon found each lecture on the molding qualities of thermosets, or the principals of hydro-forming, to be less interesting than ominous. A vision of apocalypse was starting to take shape, not one of fissures brimming with molten lava, but of a yellowish-gray cloud full with toxic particulate slowly but with tremendous weight coming to settle down over its makers.

So I decided to find myself a little restaurant in need of a dishwasher and set things to soak for a while. What ultimately occurred to me was not the unique epiphany I had hoped for, but a very simple one. Washing dishes aside, an occupation that to this day holds an appeal I cannot articulate, there is little else a designer or maker of things is better suited for. The best I could do given this conclusion, was to pursue the act of Making responsibly and with restraint, to create things that were useful and thought provoking.

Besides the discrete white humidity sensors in each of the many rooms, objects I've always admired for their austere simplicity, the Elastic Chair was the most interesting thing on exhibit in the museum's American wing. A fairly minimal design comprised

mostly of ribbon-like strands and loops of bent wood, the chair was the creation of an unknown maker, placed in a room that could only approximate its original habitat. The facts generally used to catalogue such things, its place and year of birth having been lost, the plaque nearby offered instead a theory about its past. Samuel Gragg, a Boston furniture maker, is commonly thought to be responsible for the chair's invention but because the patent was lost in a fire there remains some mystery.

On my second visit to the Elastic Chair I brought a friend to be my aid in a brief test. After explaining my intentions and being granted his reluctant approval, I stepped over the velvet rope, which separated the present from the mid 1800s, and sat carefully down into the chair's slender lattice of bent wood.

I can only describe the sensation as similar to sitting on a baby. Exactly what I mean by that I cannot say, but suggest that the experience was both pleasant and frightening. Babies are after all, famously soft, yet to mistake one for a chair would be horrifying, and I believe would effectively remove any memory of whether or not it had been comfortable. An awareness of all that was so likely to go wrong—the chair collapsing, a guard catching us—created a vacuum that pulled all sensations away. It was smaller than it looked. I remember that.

My accomplice took the opportunity to do the same while I watched for guards. He being a larger person than myself placed considerably more tension within the delicate dove-tails of the chair's construction as well as in the moment. The chair however, held him as it had held many others, probably the guards themselves daily, with indifference to us and our little test. We exited the museum, passing normal people, to kick our way through rust colored maple leaves outside like children just out of school.

Sometime after this what remained from that day was not the image of the Elastic Chair and its sculptural beauty, but the mystery that the object and its uncertain history had presented to us. I cannot honestly say that from this point on I began any sort of crusade to find similar wrinkles in record keeping, similar diverging pathways in history, but I did take note when they arose. Part of what is so wonderful about these occurrences is the fact that



Grant Corbett

they are actual mistakes. The real history of the Elastic Chair was not intentionally veiled; it was lost, creating a space for alternate theories to take root.

There is something inherently hopeful to me about the notion that there can be more than one way to tell a story: possibly a reaction to the anxieties I felt as a child and young adult as I constantly seemed to misinterpret or outright miss the point of most literature. While reading a story I would commonly rearrange the elements, removing those I disliked and favoring ones that interested me.

In this way I have always felt close to any artist's work that seeks to arrange stories according to an internal hierarchy. Henry Darger created an alternate history in which children battled with grown-ups across 15,000 pages of writing and elaborate illustrations. David Macaulay successfully reinvents the origins of the American motel in his book, *Motel of the Mysteries*, in which the entire function of the 20th century architectural form is misinterpreted by archaeologists to be a place of spirituality. With wire and thread Alexander Calder built a traveling circus smaller in size but grander in spirit than any involving living beasts. What if Calder's Circus was what defined the word circus, as if through some subversion of history, two similar entities were exchanged?

Circus Pronunciation: \sər-kaʃ\ Function: noun

A performance in which elaborately constructed mechanical representations of living beings is conducted by one or two people.

This idea, commonplace in design, is embodied in the practice of building reproductions of objects. Thonet, Tiffany, Eames. The list of well known designers whose work has been reproduced is endless. Each object created, the original and now its reproduction, holds multiple places in time, stemming from the authentic and radiating outward with each new telling. The history of these objects if represented three dimensionally might look something like a model of the sun, with its many planets around her, their moons around them.

I like to think of the history of all made things contained in one enormous imaginary file cabinet. In this cabinet would be millions of folders, in each a record of all pertinent information which serves to properly document one object. If we can invent history how would it be organized? Chronologically? By type? I imagine no matter what the system, as in any file cabinet, there would be small spaces. What happens if one were to insert in a space between existing ideas a new file?

By creating a process for making that starts with salvaging an existing material, in this case automotive sheet metal, time begins slowly to bend backward. By forming the material into shapes that seem connected to a previous era, time is further bent. Objects that are created from this process are in no way reproductions, but rather objects of a parallel alter-industry.

This work is a statement about our relationship to the waste we manage to amass. The consequences we face can be viewed as hopeless or we can begin to chip away at the problem. As a maker of things, and in this body of work in particular, I mean to raise awareness of these issues not in the form of scientific data, but with a love of well made functional objects. To this end I've designed not objects, but a system for making objects in an effort to create an imagined history of manufacturing in which the automobile was meant all along to be processed and reformatted into furniture.

AN IDEA THAT KEEPS

Written by Leah Campbell

Long before we had to navigate a nasty slew of preservatives in our food, there were preserves. Preserving, an alternative to drying, smoking and salting, held redolent summer produce over into the sparse winter months. The jars that made this process possible have become synonymous with the name Mason.

John Landis Mason patented his version of a glass canning jar on November 30, 1858, one hundred and fifty years ago this fall. The canning jar, with its distinctive seal closure, wide mouth, tall body and short neck, had been made before. But Mason's patent replaced the common groove ring wax seal, which was messy and unreliable at best. Mason, a tinsmith from Philadelphia who lived in Brooklyn, New York, crafted a continuous threaded neck on a square-shouldered jar with a threaded cap that screwed down. It was an airtight seal. And it has been repeated endlessly since its inception.

Mason's obituary in *The New York Times* noted that his jar was "in use in nearly every household" at the time of his death. The Mason jar was good news for families everywhere, but it particularly meant that urban areas could take advantage of the nation's produce. The jars were affordable and reusable, and canning spread across the country.

During the world wars, when warring countries devoured resources at unheard of rates, the American people were encouraged to plant Victory Gardens in unused parcels of land. The government asked its citizens to grow and can their own food in order to support the troops and the nation rose to the occasion. By 1943 there

were twenty million gardens on the home front and the fruit grew faster than families could eat in a season. Home canners hung service flags provided by the National War Garden Commission in their front windows that read, "Can vegetables fruits AND the Kaiser too." To preserve – to keep, both in safety and from rotting – became a national imperative.

Although the "seeds of victory" were supposed to "insure the fruits of peace," the war to end all wars has begot new wars, messier and even more costly. Four years into the War on Terror, our government has sent a stimulus package to more than one hundred and thirty million households. The "temporary" and "robust" "booster shot" for the economy is supposed to "lead to higher consumer spending" – a stark contrast to the past's rallying calls for conservation. As if to parallel the shift, Mason jars have become collectibles to amass rather than use and can go for thousands of dollars. Commercial canning has long outstripped home preservation. To many Americans, canned vegetables are more recognizable than when they are plucked from the ground.

Still, there's something powerful that remains in canning. It connects us to the past, to the notion that preserving food was once a necessity of human survival. Tending to the food that comes off the land is the same as tending to it as it grows in the earth. One hundred and fifty years after the advent of Mason's jar, a new imperative emerges: to cultivate a sense of preservation for the earth that acknowledges but also runs deeper than the borders of a nation.

Donut Peaches & Time

Written by Charlotte Kamin

What do you do with an ex? Some people willingly partake in long awkward dinners that dance around any significant conversations. Some share shots in nostalgic bars that seem too dark in the daytime. I've heard of casual encounters of romance that allow physical play to erase words; no need to fight over who used to clean more, who snored, who took better care of the dog. Others will only go the movies with their exes, that way they know what time it will be over and more importantly there will be no talking.

Me and my ex, we pickle. It started, I think, as an excuse to hangout. The four hour dinners that ended with uncomfortable hugs goodbye became a little too obvious, we needed a new task, one we had never done as a couple. I believe it was Sara's suggestion.

"We should make pickles." We were probably at a bar.

"I like pickled string beans."

And thus began the tradition. And at the start of every summer we storm the farmers market armed with Sara's many tote bags and pockets full of twenties.

"Oh look at the lemon cucumbers."

"Sara check out the donut peaches."

"What can we do with okra?"

We reach for a bundle of carrots, two pencil-thick orange roots have grown intertwined: a greenmarket Red Cross logo.

"I can tell you why that happens."

The farmer smiles, removing the greens with one whack.

"It's because they ain't got room underground to grow. They are forced together by the dirt."

Back at the apartment, the one I live in alone that used to be ours, we present the goods in different vessels. An old glass Tupperware we bought at a Salvation Army is overflowing with yellow and green wax beans. The yellow tray her mother gave us holds mounds of purple and red radishes. There's watermelon and peaches, green tomatoes and scapes, too many different kinds of cucumbers and of course the carrots.

We begin by making a large batch of the vinegary base. I use the giant All-Clad stock pot that I bought on impulse five years ago and have used four times, once for mulled wine.

"This year I want to write down what we do." Sara, always the planner, already has the notebook out and ready. Every year it becomes such a chaotic exchange, with an ever growing roster of ingredients, that we come back each year to the pot having fully forgotten how to pickle.

"Okay," I say while drawing the tin box of dried herbs and spices from the cupboard.

"Let's start with the lemon cukes." Three large stockpots rattle away on the stove, filled with mason jars both new and used. The lids that have rust I discard with the greens. We fill the steaming masons with our assorted vegetables, fill up with the hot vinegar, and I begin the impulsive mixture of spices: a little dill here, a dried habanero there, peppercorns all around. Sara scurries to write down all the ingredients. I've already forgotten which ones I've added to what.

At the end of the day, we stack our wares along the counters: beautiful jars filled with the summer's goods, a wall of slowly preserving vegetation.

"All I really want are the string beans and some cucumbers." Sara begins to divide the bounty.

What becomes of our tradition? The popped tops end up on the bottom shelf in my fridge; an entire corner that looks like a science experiment. The ones that make it through with tight seals live in the makeshift pantry in my hall. A few months pass, some dinner guest expresses interest in pickles, I whip out a jar, break the seal, and present a vinegary gift. A drunken night has me eating dilled carrots that should have been left a month more. Aside from that, not much happens to our pickles. I always have big plans: the donut peaches with brandy and mint would go great with grilled pork, the watermelon rind could go with spicy ribs, mixed radishes chopped up in seared fish tacos. But no, the jars sit in the fridge, every so often re-opened for a taste. But when summer comes Sara and I get ready with the too many totes, and never enough jars.



SHIRLEY, NY

WORDS & ILLUSTRATIONS BY: ELIZABETH SCHULA

When I first started gardening here, I tried doing things the way I'd always done them. I planted peas, which died, followed by cucumbers, which also died. I had a few more failures, and murdered Percy's plum tree trying to transplant it. I had a lot to learn.

I spent an entire year observing our yard. I knew we had mostly sandy soil and due to about a million trees, a lot of shade. But I found one small spot back by the apple trees that gets almost full sun, except in the early morning when it's blocked by a hedgerow of locusts, junk cherries and vines. I'm forever wrestling cats claw, virginia creeper and Japanese honeysuckle out of the fences, otherwise they take over. But back here I like the privacy, so I let them grow. This is my favorite spot to sit, under the living arbor that Roy built. He cut the tops off of four honey locust trees that grow close together and used the branches to build a ladder over the top and rungs for the living trunks.

In the spring, the arbor is loaded with sweet smelling locust flowers. In the summer, branches grow as fast as I can prune them, which I do to let the trumpet vine get some light. I like to sit here when the fog descends in our yard. The air suddenly cools and sometimes tastes salty. It can smell briny or fishy or fresh. Some days I can hear the ocean. The high humidity can be hard on some plants. Some of the hybrid roses suffered with leaf spot and a really bad case of aphids. I noticed that the healthiest parts of our half-acre were the places that grew wild. Patches of blackberries, wild roses, junk cherries, dandelions and red clover were flourishing and attracting birds and insects. By comparison, the rest of the yard seemed dead. A non-native grass lawn, mowed to within an inch of its life does not harbor beneficial insects. I wanted to attract some ladybugs or lacewings to eat the aphids that were attacking the roses, and I wanted to lure bees to the apples, herbs and flowers.

I read about companion planting and herb gardening and gardening with native plants. I read about forest gardens, and shade gardens and gardening by the seashore. And I read about permaculture and sustainability. Permaculture is the closest model for the way I garden, except we don't grow enough to feed ourselves. But we could grow enough herbs for the community, and several of our neighbors, who now keep chickens, could raise more, and other people could grow vegetables and fruits and nuts and more herbs, depending on what grows well in their yards.

The deck outside our kitchen door gets the most sun, so we keep pots of herbs and vegetables there. Leaves, garden waste, vegetable scraps from the kitchen and seaweed from the bay

become nutritious food for the garden. We try to watch the garden and help it take care of itself. We try to create a system instead of a quick fix. Permaculture, it seems to me, is about using common sense. But I don't like the word. Nothing is permanent. That is even more evident in our changing climate. The last few

winters have been so warm, I wonder if it's warm enough to plant the avocado that I started on a whim from the pit that's now six feet tall. The Fire Island shoreline changes drastically every winter. In our yard alone, trees and limbs are sometimes blown down by hurricane force winds. Plants, animals and insects come and go. Roy's beloved dog K and cat Percy are buried near the apples. Every autumn plants die, or at least die back and leaves fall. And fall. Death, decay, rebirth. Constant change. Impermanence.

The trees growing around the edges of our yard are pruned so that the air flows through them. They are a living fence around us, protecting the house from strong coastal winds we need to keep clear of the house. So the trees became the model for what to grow in shade and on edges of woodland. We have huge oaks, hickories, maple and pine trees. Roy has planted apples, raspberries and one asparagus plant that thrived. So I planted more asparagus, and other edible perennials: strawber-

ries, Jerusalem artichokes, more berries and tons of herbs. Herbs are the real stars in this yard. Oh, and flowers. Echinacea, yarrow and feverfew started to grow where the peas and cucumbers had died. One strip of newly cultivated lawn became another prairie garden: more echinacea and yarrow, an unusual butterfly bush that has fragrant yellow and orange flowers, tall bottlebrush grass and northern sea oats. Anywhere there is a bare spot in the spring I plant annual herbs and flowers.

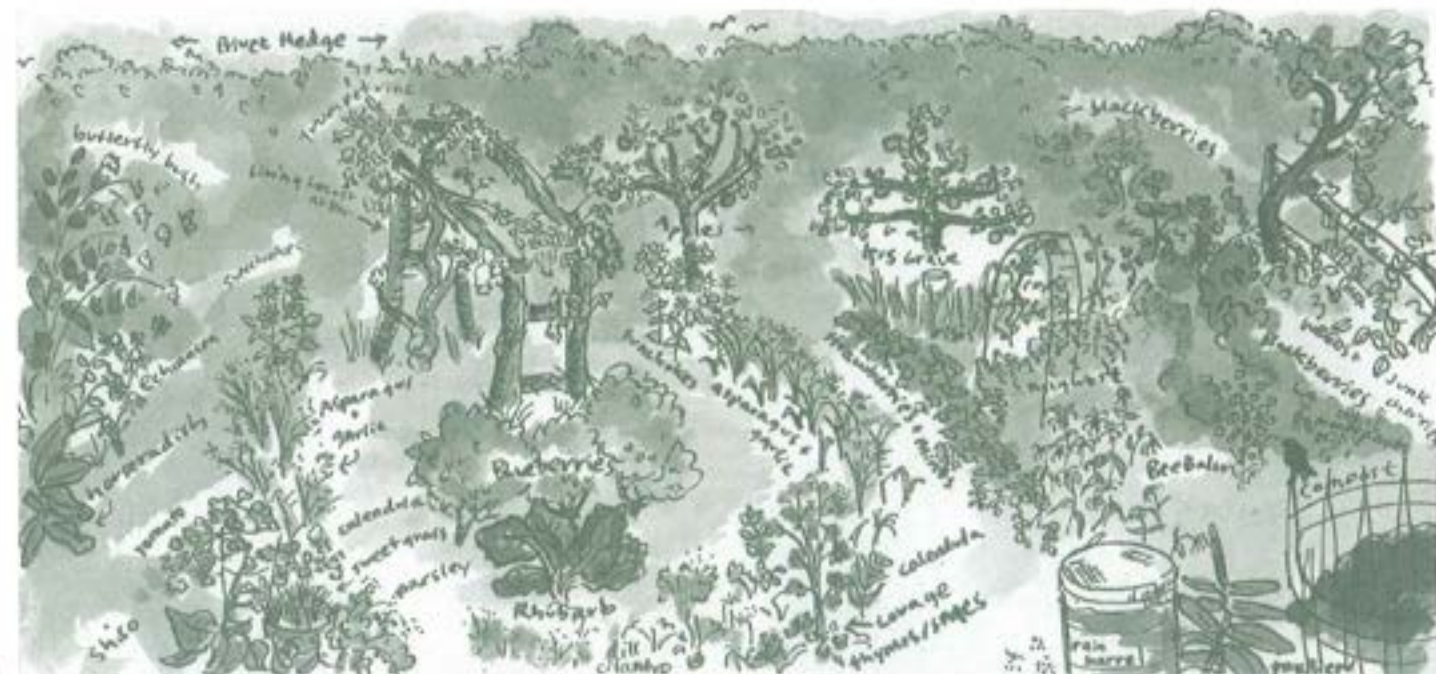
Bees, lacewings and hoverflies love flowering dill, parsley and coriander. Dandelions, red clover, shepherds purse and golden rod seem to be a big hit, so I let them grow. Monarch butterflies flock to the echinacea, especially during their migration in the late summer. The birds here are amazing. They enjoy the protection of the trees and bushes and feast on berries. If we want any for ourselves we cover them with plastic netting. Squirrels make nests in the oaks and hide hickory nuts all over the place.

The year I spent observing our yard I was sick, due to, among other things, a diet that lacked enough beneficial bacteria, vitamins and minerals. So, to supply Roy and I with probiotics, I learned to make kombucha, sauerkrauts and pickles using lacto fermentation. We ate seaweed and whole grains and good vegetables and I learned to make medicines from some plants that grow in the yard and the herb garden.

I've been learning about them for years, but herbs have a way of letting you know what to do with them. Teas are a good place to start. Fresh thyme, steeped in hot water, is sublime. One combination I love is raspberry leaf, mint and lemon balm, so I harvest huge bunches, tie them with twine and hang them in the rafters of our house to dry. One plant that I've grown to love, that you can find in abundance on the east coast, is sassafras. I guess

I've become a cultivator of sassafras by just watching the process happen without too much input from me. It grows in groves around the edges of woodlands and sends up shoots from its roots so there is a constant supply of seedlings. Sometimes I transplant them if its crowding out another plant but often they land in a good spot. In the spring and summer I collect the leaves from the mature trees, hang them to dry and when they're dry enough (they should be crispy and crumble easily, but not shatter,) put them in a food processor or coffee grinder and reduce them to a fine powder. This is called file, a classic thickener for gumbo when you don't have okra, but I use it to thicken any kind of soup or sauce. It tastes green and slightly of anise when it's fresh. It loses its flavor after a while so I try to use it within six months or so.

Another way to use sassafras is to make an open or wild-fermented beer. In the fall, when the medicinal qualities are strongest I dig up a one or two year old tree. I'm careful with the shovel and dig a wide hole so I don't damage the bark. I wash the root and peel it. It smells strongly of root beer. I use my thumbnail and fingers to strip the bark, but you could also use a pairing knife. I dry the bark shavings on a screen or in a wide mesh colander for a day or two. Sassafras root bark is used medicinally and it is available in herbal or health food stores. I use something called a ginger bug as a starter for my root beer, but I've also used a pinch of yeast or nothing at all and let it ferment for a few days and it's always delicious. Open fermented beers are really wild and they are always different. I use whatever I've got on hand. I like to flavor my sassafras beer with a bit of ginger, licorice and roasted dandelion root from my yard, but you should really experiment on your own. Herbs are powerful medicine and some may not be right for you, so I suggest reading up on them.



GINGER BEER

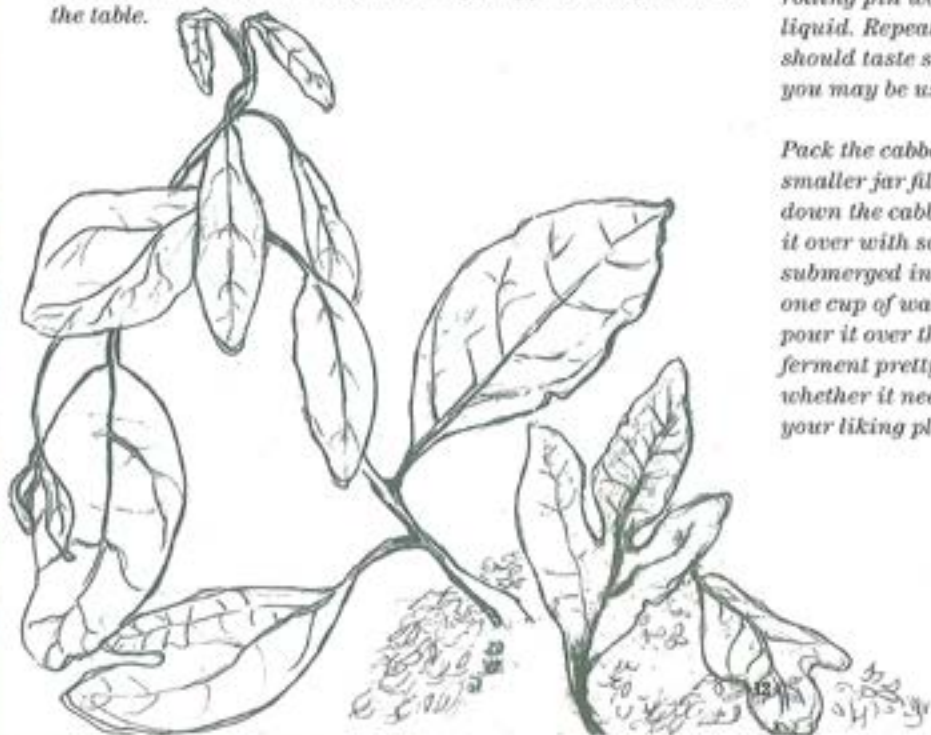
- 1 cup water
- 2 teaspoon sugar
- 2 teaspoon minced fresh ginger

Put this mixture in a jar, put a lid on and shake it up. Put it in a warm place. The next day add the same amount of sugar and ginger and shake it up and put it back in a warm place. Do this each day until it starts to bubble and come alive. This can happen in 2 to 5 days or so

ROOT BEER

- 2 Tablespoons dried sassafras root bark
- 1 scant Tablespoons dried licorice root
- 1 scant Tablespoons roasted dried dandelion root
- 1 inch piece of fresh ginger, minced
- ¼ cup sugar
- ⅔ cup maple syrup

Put the herbs and sugar in a pot with 1 quart filtered water. Bring to a boil. Turn down the heat and simmer gently for about 15 minutes. Turn off the heat and let the herbs steep, covered, for an hour or so. Into a large jar, over a fine mesh colander pour the herbal tea, 1 quart cold filtered water, ⅔ cup maple syrup and 1 cup ginger bug. Cover the jar with a cloth and let it sit in a warm spot for a few days, until it starts to bubble and come alive. Pour into bottles and cap them. Let them sit at room temperature for 24 hours to build up carbonation. Refrigerate. The bottles of root beer are extremely volatile, so use caution when opening them. Once, I gave some bottles of dandelion and sassafras beer to my friend Pat. She put them in the trunk of her car, drove upstate and when she opened the back end one of the bottles shot out like a rocket. Now we enjoy sassafras beer once or twice a year for a few weeks at a time, well chilled, traveling only from the garden to the table.



FERMENTATION

I have always liked to make and have pickles in the restaurants and have generally always followed a standard vinegar based recipe for making quick, refrigerator pickles. Making brined and fermented pickles always seemed quite mystical and a little scary. Elizabeth started making lacto-fermented vegetables a couple of years ago. As with everything else she does, she has mastered the task of making these fermented pickles and has been able to enlighten the rest of us. -CF

SAUERKRAUT

Sauerkraut is the easiest and most foolproof of the lacto-fermented breed. It generally behaves and tastes just as you would hope. Start with this to get your confidence up and then advance to the rest.

- 1 large head red or green cabbage
- sea salt
- seasonings (optional, use only one flavor per batch): caraway seeds, slightly crushed juniper berries, black peppercorns, garlic

Shred the cabbage and then place half of it in a large bowl or bucket. Sprinkle with sea salt, the same amount of salt you would use if you were going to make a cabbage salad, a good even sprinkling. With clean hands, mix the salt throughout the cabbage squeezing and smashing the cabbage as you go (a rolling pin works well) to help break it down and release the liquid. Repeat with the rest of the cabbage. Taste the cabbage. It should taste salty and good not over-salty. Add any seasonings you may be using.

Pack the cabbage tightly into a one gallon glass jar. Place a smaller jar filled with water inside the larger jar to weigh down the cabbage. Place a kitchen towel over the jars and tie it over with some twine. By the next day the cabbage should be submerged in its liquid. If it isn't, make a brine by combining one cup of water with one scant Tablespoon of sea salt and pour it over the cabbage. The cabbage will start to bubble and ferment pretty quickly. Start to taste it after a week and decide whether it needs to ferment longer. When it is fermented to your liking place the sauerkraut in clean jars and refrigerate.



CUCUMBER PICKLES

- 4# kirby cucumbers
- 1 bunch fresh grape leaves
- 2 heads flowering dill
- 1 Tablespoon whole black peppercorns
- 1 chile arbol, crumbled
- 1 head garlic, peeled and cut in half
- 8 cups water
- 6 Tablespoons sea salt

Scrub the cucumbers well. Use your thumbnail or a paring knife to scrape away the blossom end of the cucumber. Refresh the cucumbers by placing them in ice water for an hour. If you have access to grape leaves (they keep the pickles crunchy), use them to line the bottom of two gallon sized glass jars, unless you have one very large glass jar or crock. Add the dill, peppercorn and garlic. Pack the cucumbers into the jars and then cover with the brine made from dissolving the salt into the water. Weigh down the cucumbers with a smaller jar filled with water. Cover with a towel and ferment. Check pickles daily, skim away any mold that rises to the top and begin tasting after a few days. Pickles will probably take about a week to fully ferment. Transfer to clean jars and refrigerate.

GREEN BEANS

- 4# green beans
- 1 bunch fresh grape leaves
- 2 heads flowering dill
- 1 head garlic (or to taste), peeled and cut in half
- 1 chile arbol crumbled
- 8 cups water
- 6 Tablespoons sea salt

Clean and stem beans, leave whole. Proceed as above with pickled cucumbers.

KIMCHI

- 1 head napa or savoy cabbage, cut into 1½" strips
- 1 large daikon radish or other radishes (red, watermelon, black), thinly sliced
- 2 turnips, peeled and thinly sliced
- 2 carrots, peeled and thinly sliced
- 6" small fresh ginger
- 1 head garlic
- fresh hot peppers or cayenne pepper, to taste
- 1 bunch scallions
- 8 cups water
- 6 Tablespoons sea salt

Make a brine with the water and sea salt. Place the cabbage, daikon, turnips and carrots in the brine, cover with a kitchen towel and let sit overnight. Mince the ginger, garlic, peppers and scallions or make a paste with a mortar and pestle. Drain the vegetables, reserving the brine. Mix the seasonings and vegetables together and then pack everything tightly into a glass jar. Press the kimchi down into the jar until the liquid starts to cover the vegetables. Add as much of the reserved brine as necessary to cover the vegetables. Place a smaller jar filled with water on top of the kimchi to weigh it down. Cover with a kitchen towel and secure it around the opening of the jar with an elastic or twine. Place kimchi in a cool place and allow to ferment for one week or longer. When the kimchi is ready remove any goo or mold from around the top and transfer to clean jars and refrigerate.



by Caroline Fidanza

PREPARE



Ava Brackett

LATE SUMMER

HOMEMADE BUTTER and RADISHES

1 quart quality cream
coarse sea salt like Sel Gris
radishes

Buy the best cream you can find from a farmer who raises cows on grass. Evan's dairy is our choice. Whip the cream with a hand-held mixer or in the bowl of a kitchen aid. Let it go until it becomes butter. Remove the butter and place in a strainer lined with cheesecloth. Let sit for about half an hour until most of the buttermilk seeps out. Squeeze out the remaining buttermilk through the cheesecloth and then transfer the butter to a bowl. With a wooden spoon, mix in the sea salt to taste. A little more buttermilk will be visible but don't worry: it's hard to get it all out. Serve the butter immediately with radishes on the side.

CARROT SALAD w/ TOASTED ALMONDS and PARSLEY

1 bunch carrots, peeled and thinly sliced on the bias
1 cup sliced almonds, toasted
1 cup picked and cleaned parsley
1 Tablespoon dijon mustard
1 shallot, thinly sliced
¼ cup red wine vinegar
¾ cup extra virgin olive oil

Slice carrots as thinly as possible, really. Maybe you have a mandolin, use that, otherwise try hard, it makes a real difference. Make sure you get sliced almonds, not slivered. Slivered almonds are kind of quartered and a little too chunky for this dish.

Make a vinaigrette by combining the mustard, shallot and vinegar in a bowl. Slowly whisk in the olive oil and season with salt and pepper. When ready to serve, toss the carrots and parsley with the vinaigrette. Place on a plate and sprinkle generously with sliced toasted almonds.

PICKLED BEETS

2 bunches beets
2 cups cider vinegar
2 cups water
¾ cup sugar
½ cup salt
2 Tablespoons each; star anise, whole black peppercorn, coriander seed, mustard seed

Roast and peel the beets. Slice into ¼" rounds. Bring the vinegar, water, sugar, salt and spices to a boil. When the sugar and salt have dissolved pour over the beets. Allow to cool at room temperature and then refrigerate. Beets will be ready to eat the next day.

PICKLED GREEN TOMATOES

6-8 green tomatoes, sliced into ¼" rounds
1 large spanish onion, sliced
4 cups cider vinegar
1 cup water
1 cup sugar
½ cup salt
2 Tablespoons each; coriander seed, fennel seed, mustard seed, whole black peppercorn
2 teaspoons turmeric
1 Tablespoon fenugreek
2 chile arbol, crushed

These seasonings will make these pickles mildly curried. Heat the vinegar, water, sugar, salt and whole spices (exclude the turmeric, fenugreek and chile) until liquid comes to a boil and the sugar and salt are fully dissolved. Pour the pickle over the tomatoes and onions. Add the turmeric, fenugreek and chile arbol. Taste. If pickles need more sugar or salt, add them. Look at the color of the pickle. If you want it to be more yellow add more turmeric but be careful not to add too much as it will become bitter. Allow pickles to cool at room temperature and then refrigerate. Green tomatoes will be ready to eat the next day.

ROASTED TOMATO SOUP w/FARRO

6 tomatoes
4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
pinch ground chile arbol
1 bunch thyme or summer savory, tied in a bouquet
1 cup farro
1 bunch scallions, thinly sliced on the bias
extra virgin olive oil

The tomatoes can either be grilled, broiled or roasted in the oven. I like a charred flavor in this soup so if it's possible to grill them it would be nice but not necessary. If you are going to grill them, core the tomatoes and leave whole. Toss with olive oil and place on a hot grill. Allow tomatoes to char, rotating them until they soften and wilt. Remove from the grill and let cool. When cool enough to handle, pull off the skins, rough chop the tomatoes and hold.

If you are roasting or broiling the tomatoes, cut out the core and then cut the tomatoes in half. Lay the tomatoes out on a sheet tray and season them on the cut side with salt and a drizzle of olive oil. Then turn them over and drizzle again with olive oil. Either place the tomatoes under the broiler or roast them in a 450° oven until they char and wilt. Remove and let cool. Again, when cool enough to handle pull off the skins, rough chop the tomatoes and hold.

Heat a large soup pot and add about ¼ cup olive oil. Add the garlic and allow it to sizzle and turn golden. Add the chile arbol and the bouquet of herb. Mix and allow the aromas to release and then carefully add the tomatoes. Mix well, season with salt and turn to a low simmer. Add 3 cups of water and cook until everything comes together. You don't want the soup to be too thick but to be nice and substantial. Season additionally with salt as needed.

*To cook the farro:
Bring a pot of water to a boil add salt and farro. Cook until tender. Strain and toss with olive oil. Hold.*

When ready to serve the soup add the farro to the soup and warm everything through. Add a generous pinch of scallion to the top of the soup once you have ladled it into a bowl. Drizzle with a little olive oil and serve.

GRILLED LEG OF LAMB w/ EGGPLANT RELISH and HERB SALAD

1 leg of lamb, boned and butterflied
12 cloves garlic
3 Tablespoons aleppo pepper or smoked Spanish paprika
1 bunch summer savory
2 large eggplants
1 bunch radishes
1 small bunch parsley, picked
1 small bunch mint, picked
1 bunch scallions, thinly sliced
lemons
extra virgin olive oil

You will want to marinate the leg of lamb overnight. Season the leg on both sides with salt and pepper. Take 8 cloves of garlic, a pinch of salt and 1 Tablespoon aleppo pepper or smoked paprika and work into a puree either with a mortar and pestle or with a knife, mincing and then mashing with the side of your blade as you go. Aleppo pepper and smoked Spanish paprika are available in gourmet grocery stores or in middle-eastern grocery stores. It comes either sweet or hot. Choose sweet, it's more versatile. Thin the mixture with a little olive oil, mix with the savory and massage into lamb leg. Refrigerate overnight.

Place the eggplants in a bowl and rub with olive oil. Put eggplant on a sheet tray and roast in a 350° oven until soft and deflated. Remove from oven and let cool. When cool enough to handle, peel the skin off the eggplants and chop the flesh rather well. Sizzle 4 cloves of garlic in ¼ cup of olive oil. When golden, pour the garlic over the eggplant. Season as needed with salt, olive oil and lemon juice.

Place the sliced radishes, parsley, mint and scallions into a bowl. Season with olive oil, lemon juice and sea salt. Let sit for about 5 minutes to marry but not so long that the herbs will too much.

Grill the lamb on hot grill. It will not take very long to cook the leg to medium rare so be sure to have the grill hot enough to get a nice char on either side. Remove the lamb from the grill and let rest. Slice the whole butterflied leg up into long even slices.



GROUND CHERRY CAKE

For the pastry:

- 2 cups butter, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 4 egg yolks
- 2¾ cups flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground cardamom

Cream the butter with the sugar. Add the vanilla, lemon juice and zest and egg yolks one at a time. Whisk together the flour, salt and cardamom. Add to the butter mixture. Be careful not to over mix. Divide the dough in half. It will be sticky. Refrigerate for at least an hour.

For the filling:

- 2 cups ground cherries, cape gooseberries, husk tomatoes, whatever you like to call them
- 2 large apples
- 2 Tablespoons butter
- 1 Tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 Tablespoons brandy
- ¼ cup sugar
- ½ vanilla bean

Melt 2 Tablespoons butter in a large sauté pan. Turn the heat to medium high and add the ground cherries and apples. Add the sugar and then saute, tossing or stirring until the apples are lightly browned and the cherry skins pop open. Scrape the seeds from the vanilla bean and add them to the pan. Stir well. Deglaze the pan with lemon juice and brandy. Let cool.

Roll out half of the dough on a heavily floured surface. This dough is sticky and has a tendency to break, just patch it together. Place dough in a deep 9" tart shell or in a springform pan. Pull the dough slightly up at the edges. Roll out the other half of the dough. Spoon the filling into the prepared dough and then place the second round of dough on top of the filling, pinching together broken bits if necessary. Brush with an egg wash (beat an egg with a small amount of water), sprinkle with sugar, prick the top all over with a fork and place in a preheated 350° oven. Bake 45-50 minutes until brown and firm. Cool completely.

Note: If you are not the most experienced baker, this dough may seem like a disaster when you try to roll it out. Don't be discouraged. Use a lot of flour in the rolling out process and if it falls apart just pat it into the tart shell or springform and even the top. Don't worry: it will come together when it bakes and it will be one of the best things you ever make. †

EARLY FALL

CHICKEN LIVER MOUSSE

- 1 spanish onion, sliced
- 4 shallots, sliced
- 6 cloves garlic, sliced
- 1# chicken liver
- ½ cup brandy
- unsalted butter
- sherry vinegar

In a heavy bottomed sauté pan, heat ¼# butter until it sizzles. Add the onion, shallots and garlic to the butter. Season well with salt, turn heat to medium-low and allow to slowly and deeply caramelize. Drain the chicken livers through a strainer and then lay them out on paper towels to absorb any blood or moisture. Look over livers and remove any unpleasant things hanging off of them. Season the livers well on both sides with salt and pepper. In a separate sauté pan cook the livers on high heat in a combination of olive oil and butter (about 3 Tablespoons of each to start.) Cook the livers fast, allowing them to brown on the outside but remain pink on the inside. Do so in small batches being sure not to overcrowd the pan. Deglaze the pan in between batches with sherry vinegar. Transfer the cooked livers and onions to a bowl until everything is cooked. When all of the livers are cooked deglaze the pan with the brandy and then pour the brandy over the livers and onions. Allow everything to cool.

Note: Don't be afraid to add a lot of butter to the pan to cook the livers and the onions, this is where a lot of the flavor is going to come from. This is not a low-cal, low-fat dish so you may as well make it taste good.

Once the livers and onions are cool but not cold puree them in a food processor. Put everything in at once and let the motor run: you want this to be really smooth. Season with sherry, vinegar, salt and pepper, tasting over and over again until you don't feel that it can taste any better than it does. Chill.

Serve with plenty of toasted or grilled baguette. Chicken liver mousse will hold in the refrigerator for about a week.

CAULIFLOWER SALAD

- 1 head cauliflower
- ½ cup raisins
- ¼ cup pine nuts
- 2 shallots, thinly sliced
- 1 teaspoon picked thyme
- 1 Tablespoon Pommery (grainy) mustard
- ¼ cup sherry vinegar
- ¾ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 6 slices bread
- 1 clove garlic
- small handful parsley

Separate the cauliflower into florets, season with salt and drizzle with olive oil. Spread out on a sheet tray and roast in a 400° oven until golden. Remove.

Toast pine nuts and then rough chop either by hand or pulse in a food processor. Place the raisins in a container and cover them with the sherry vinegar until they plump up. Place pine nuts, shallots, thyme and mustard in a bowl. Add the vinegar from the raisins and a pinch of salt and then slowly add the olive oil. Check seasoning.

Toast bread in the oven until dry. Place toasted bread and garlic into the bowl of a food processor along with the parsley and whizz together.

Place cauliflower in a bowl and toss with raisins and vinaigrette. Serve sprinkled with bread crumbs.

BRAISED RABBIT w/CRANBERRY BEANS

- 1, 2½-3# rabbit, cut into pieces
- 1 carrot, small dice
- 2 ribs celery, small dice
- 1 large onion, small dice
- 12 cloves garlic, cut in half
- 1 small bunch thyme
- 4 bay leaves
- 1 orange, zested in strips with a vegetable peeler
- 2-3 cups red wine

Season the rabbit well on all sides with salt and pepper. Place in a large dish with all of the other ingredients. Add enough wine to cover the rabbit and let marinate overnight, turning the meat at least once. Remove the rabbit from the marinade and brown it off in batches in a sauté pan or dutch oven. After the last of the rabbit is brown place the wine, vegetables and aromatics into the pan or pot and bring to a simmer. Either place the rabbit pieces in a braising pan and pour the liquid and vegetables over them or return the pieces to the dutch oven with the wine. Cover the pot or place foil over the pan and place it in a 350° oven until tender. The leg of the rabbit should show no resistance when pierced with a knife.

- 2 cups shelled cranberry beans
- 1 bunch sage, leaves picked
- 1 head garlic, peeled and cut in half the long way
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil

Place the cranberry beans in a pot and just barely cover them with water. Add the olive oil to the beans as well as the garlic and the sage leaves. Cook the beans on low heat adding water only as necessary. When beans seem done season them with salt. Allow them to cook a little longer and then check for doneness. Beans should be eaten warm but not hot.



OLGA
RAFFAULT
1989
CHINON
"Les Picotés"

BEEF CONSOMMÉ w/ROOT VEGETABLES

For the consommé:

- 3# beef bones
- 1# ground beef
- 6 eggs
- 1 bunch carrots
- 1 bunch celery
- 2 large Spanish onions
- 2 heads garlic
- 1 bunch thyme
- 1 bunch parsley
- 8 bay leaves
- 2 Tablespoons whole black pepper

Lay the beef bones out on a roasting pan or sheet tray and brown them in a 400° oven. Remove the bones from the oven and put them into a stock pot. Add half a bunch of carrots and celery, both chopped into ½" pieces, one onion and one head of garlic, both cut in half. Cover with water and bring to a boil. Skim and then add half a bunch of thyme and parsley, 4 bay leaves and a Tablespoon of black pepper. Simmer for about 3-4 hours or longer until you have a rich, flavorful stock. Strain and cool completely.

Cut the remaining carrots and celery into matchsticks. Thinly slice the onions and garlic. Place everything in a bowl, add the rest of the thyme, parsley and pepper. Mix everything together. Separate the eggs holding the yolks for another use. Place the whites into a bowl and whisk them to soft peaks. Add the ground beef, the eggshells and the egg whites to the vegetables. Mix everything together again. Place the cooled stock into a clean pot. Add the vegetable, beef and egg mixture to the stock. First stir the mixture into the stock well. Turn the heat on to medium high and stirring regularly bring the mixture up to just nearly a boil. What you are doing at this point is clarifying the stock. As the stock warms you want to mix the proteins into it so that any impurities will adhere to them. However, once the stock gets hot and is ready to boil you don't want to mix it anymore. It's important to keep your eye on it. As the stock and vegetable matter (called the raft) start to swell and come close to boiling you want to lower the heat and create a ventilation hole on the top of the raft. There will be a natural point where this will want to happen. The hole will allow the stock to simmer through the raft without destroying it. Simmer for about half an hour and then carefully remove the raft with a slotted spoon. Discard the raft and then ladle the stock through a strainer lined with cheesecloth. Discard any sediment at the bottom of the pot. Do not pour the stock through the strainer. It is important to ladle it from the top.

p.s. the raft serves 2 purposes, one to create a filtration system but also to add more flavor back into the stock.

For the soup:

- 1 large celery root, medium dice
- 4 carrots, medium dice
- 1 large turnip, medium dice
- 4 ribs celery, medium dice
- 1 cup picked parsley
- butter
- extra virgin olive oil

Heat a large saute pan and cook the vegetables, one at a time, in a combination of butter and olive oil. Seasoning with salt and pepper as you go. When all of the vegetables are cooked

QUINCE PASTE and CHEESE

quince
sugar

Buy yellow ripe quince. If they're green, let them ripen at room temperature for a few days. With this recipe you control the amount of paste you'd like to make. Since it takes a bit of time at the stove, you may want to make a large batch. Quince paste keeps at room temperature, wrapped or in an airtight container for several months.

Scrub the quince. Put them in a steamer basket over a large pot of water. Cover and steam until quince are tender to the core. This will take 30 minutes or more depending on the size and amount of fruit. Allow the quince to cool enough to handle them. Core the quince and then place in a blender or food processor and puree until smooth. Put the quince through a food mill if you have one, if not, don't worry. Weigh or measure the quince puree and add an equal amount of sugar. In a heavy bottomed pot, cook the quince and sugar over moderate heat, stirring constantly until it thickens and starts to pull away from the sides of the pan. Cool slightly. Pour into an oiled tray, glass container or shallow bowl. When set, turn the quince out of the containers onto a wire rack. Allow the quince to air dry at room temperature for several days. Wrap well with plastic wrap or store in an airtight container. Quince paste is classically served with a manchego. Choose a firm sheep's milk cheese or an aged, dry cow's milk cheese. †

LOCAL CHEESE and HONEY

I must mention here that one of my favorite cheese producers, Sprout Creek, is actually in my home town of Poughkeepsie. They make quite a nice variety of cheeses from cow, goat and sheep's milk. I think that for Thanksgiving a nutty cow's milk cheese would go nicely. I recommend their Toussaint or Barat. Serve with honey on the side to drizzle.

THANKSGIVING

I know I've mentioned this before but I don't really like fall crops. Maybe it's just that I like summer more than I realize or am willing to admit. Maybe I fear death. I do love the fall, the smell of leaves on the ground, the big harvest moon, sweaters and scarves. But squash and apples, cabbage*, rutabaga, turnips, kale? Who loves them enough to eulogize them? We eat them, we appreciate them, but our spirit is not lifted. I have always proclaimed my dislike of the foods of the Thanksgiving meal. All orange and brown. Too many dishes on the table. And I always miss the macaroni at Thanksgiving.

So to come up with a Thanksgiving menu was a challenge, one that honors the holiday appropriately yet offers some new way of thinking about it. Inspiration came in an unexpected form. Leah came upon a prescription from the administration of Herbert Hoover on how to proceed with one's Thanksgiving dinner following the end of WWII. The Food Administration recommended that dinner be "home grown," encouraging "extreme simplicity" over "feasting" and reminding us that 300,000,000 people in the Eastern Hemisphere needed food and were living in devastation. With a call to do what is "appropriate and patriotic" six sample menus were presented. With it's poignant reminder to support our local economy and not to overindulge on a day of feasting when others are suffering in the world, the connection to our times is obvious. A little mindfulness about the choices we make on a day such as this goes a long way.

Thanksgiving requires a bird. I don't mind turkey but there are birds I'd rather eat. Herbert Hoover included chicken, pork, rabbit, goose and duck in addition to turkey as appropriate meats for the holiday. Duck provided an opportunity to make something with big flavor and richness that is so often lacking in this meal. Adobo is exotic but not so strange that it disrupts the rest of the meal. It's an excellent companion to the simple and humble flavors of the supporting cast.

*The author does actually love cabbage.

TOASTED MIXED NUTS

- ½# shelled almonds
- ½# shelled pecans
- ½# shelled pistachios
- ½# shelled hazelnuts

Place all of the nuts in a bowl and toss with either olive oil, or if you have it, nut oil and salt. Place on a sheet tray and toast in a 350° oven until brown. Cool and serve.

DUCK ADOBO

- 1 box kosher salt
- 1 orange, quartered
- 1 lemon, quartered
- 1 spanish onion, quartered
- 2 heads garlic
- 1 large bunch thyme
- black peppercorn
- bay leaves
- 2 jalapeño, serrano or other fresh chile
- chile arbol
- 2 cups soy sauce
- 2 cups apple cider vinegar

Stuff the duck with orange, lemon, onion, 1 head of garlic cut in half, 12 sprigs of thyme and 4 crushed bay leaves. Place an even layer of salt over the bottom of a roasting pan and then place the duck on top. Cover the duck with salt, you don't have to completely bury it but really cover it. Roast the duck in a 350° oven for 30-45 minutes, the salt will look crusty and a little brown. Remove the duck from the oven and when cool enough to handle scrape off all of the salt and discard the vegetables from the cavity. Remove the legs from the duck by cutting through the joint and then carefully cut the breast off the bone. The breast should be rare.

Place the garlic and 2 Tablespoons black peppercorn in a mortar and pestle and work into a puree. If you don't have a mortar and pestle mince the garlic with a knife and crush the black pepper with a saute pan or rolling pin. Place garlic and black pepper in a bowl. Add the rest of the thyme, 6 crushed bay leaves, 2 chiles cut in half, a few crushed chile arbol, a good pinch of salt and equal parts soy sauce and vinegar to cover the legs. Place the legs in the marinade and let sit overnight. The next day remove the legs from the marinade and pat dry. Heat a skillet or saute pan and brown the duck legs. Drain off the rendered fat and then add the marinade back to the pan or transfer to a pot with a tight fitting lid. Cover the legs and braise until tender, so that they show no resistance when pierced with a knife. When cool remove the meat from the bone and hold in the sauce.

When ready to serve brown the skin of the duck breast in a pan on medium heat, slowly rendering the fat. When the fat is rendered and brown turn the breast over to sear on the rare side, just for a moment to brown but not to lose the rare breast. Let rest and then slice thinly. Serve a little breast and leg all around.



SLOW COOKED GREENS

Choose a combination of fall greens; collards, kale, mustard and buy a large bunch of each

butter

6 cloves garlic, sliced

2 Spanish onions, sliced

2 chile arbol, loosely crushed by hand

4 slices thick cut bacon or a smoked pork hock or some pulled pork

¼ cup apple cider vinegar

Clean the greens and chop them into 2" pieces. Heat ½ cup of butter and saute the garlic and onions. If you are using bacon, add it at this point along with the chile. When the garlic and onions start to turn golden add the greens. Turn the heat to low and add water or chicken stock, the apple cider vinegar, the ham hock or pork if you are using that and a good amount of salt. Cover the greens and let them cook slow and low until they are very tender. Season additionally to taste with salt, pepper and vinegar.

SPIDER CORNBREAD

This is James Beard's recipe. I have always loved this one. As Mr. Beard points out the spider refers to the cast iron pan that was used in open hearth cooking. Ideally use a 9" cast iron skillet for this, otherwise use a baking pan.

4-5 Tablespoons butter

½ cup flour

2 teaspoons baking powder

1 teaspoon salt

1-2 Tablespoons sugar

1½ cups cornmeal

2 eggs

3 cups milk

Sift all of the dry ingredients except the cornmeal, then whisk in the cornmeal. Beat the eggs in a mixing bowl and then add 2 cups of the milk. Mix the wet into the dry ingredients being careful not to over mix. Heat the butter in the skillet until it sizzles and then pour in the batter. Pour the remaining cup of milk on top of the batter and bake in a 400° oven until golden and firm.

PICKLES

A sweet pickle will nicely compliment this meal, see the recipes for beet and green tomato pickle on page 16.

MASHED RUTABAGAS

4 large rutabagas

butter

This doesn't sound like anything special. I don't really think anyone eats rutabagas with any regularity, myself included. Pity though because they are so good. This dish may seem depression era but it'll make you feel good.

Peel the rutabagas and quarter them. Place them in a pot of salted cold water and bring to a boil. Turn to a simmer and cook the rutabagas until tender. Drain through a colander and place back into the cooking pot. Add ½ # of butter (or more) and mash with a potato masher. Season with salt and pepper and serve hot.

APPLE CREAM TART

For the tart shell:

1 cup flour

1 Tablespoon sugar

¼ teaspoon salt

½ cup slightly softened butter

1 Tablespoon (or more) milk

Mix together the flour, sugar and salt. Add butter and mix together with your hands until well incorporated. Add the milk and mix until the dough holds together. Form into a disk and refrigerate until slightly firm. Press the dough into a 9" tart pan. Blind bake in a 375° oven until shell just starts to brown around the edges and the bottom is firm. It will probably take about 10-15 minutes.

For the filling:

3 large apples, cored and thinly sliced

2 Tablespoons butter

½ cup sugar

½ vanilla bean

1 Tablespoon cognac

1 cup heavy cream

3 egg yolks

pinch salt

Melt the butter in a large sauté pan, turn the heat to medium high and toss in the apple slices. Sauté until softened and golden. Scrape the seeds from the vanilla bean and add them along with the sugar to the apples. Cook for a minute and then deglaze with cognac. Remove the apples from the heat and cool slightly.

Mix together 1 cup of heavy cream with 3 egg yolks and a pinch of salt. Toss the apples in the cream mixture and then pour into the prepared tart shell. Sprinkle with sugar and bake in a 350° oven until the custard is just set in the center, about 30-40 minutes. Serve room temperature. †

MOBY DICK

OYSTERS w/ BROWN BREAD and SALTY BUTTER

6 oysters per person

1 loaf brown bread

salty butter, see recipe page

FISH CHOWDER

3# cod, bass or fluke, skinned and fileted

2 dozen littleneck clams

½# bacon or salt pork, cut into lardons

potatoes, peel and small dice or thinly slice

2 cups cream

2 cups milk

butter

In a large dutch oven render the bacon or salt pork. When brown, remove from the pot and set aside. Season the filets of fish well with salt and pepper. Place a layer of potatoes on the bottom of the pot, followed by a filet of fish, ½ of the clams and a sprinkling of lardons. Continue to layer in such a way at least two more times or until all of the ingredients are used. Just barely cover the fish with a combination of cream and milk. You can use a little water as well if you don't want it to be so rich. Dot the top of the chowder with butter and then put a lid on it and cook it over medium heat (just at a simmer not a boil) until the clams open. Serve.

SALTY HAM

1, 5# pork sirloin

2# kosher salt

1# brown sugar

1 ½ gallon water

1 quart dark beer (optional)

¼ cup whole black peppercorns

1 bunch thyme

8 bay leaves, crushed

2 Tablespoons coriander seed

2 Tablespoons mustard seed

Dissolve the sugar and salt in the water. Add the beer, the pork and the aromatics. Refrigerate for 5-7 days. Remove the pork from the brine, season it with salt and pepper and roast it slowly in a 250° oven until tender. If you have a smoker, which most people obviously don't, smoke it first and then roast it.

BAKED BEANS

This is based on Jasper White's recipe for baked beans.

1# navy beans, soaked overnight

6oz salt pork, thinly sliced (bacon if you can't find salt pork)

1 onion, small dice

4 cloves garlic, sliced

3 Tablespoons tomato paste

3 Tablespoons Coleman's dry mustard

2 bay leaves

½ cup maple syrup

½ cup molasses

¼ cup vinegar

Sauté the onions and garlic in a little olive oil until they start to sweat. Add the tomato paste and cook until the onions soften and the tomato paste has cooked a little. Add the mustard, bay, maple syrup molasses and vinegar. Add the beans and cover with water, bring everything to a boil and then place the salt pork on top of the pot, cover with a lid or aluminum foil and bake beans at 300° until tender. This will probably take a long time as beans don't cook very well in acidic liquids. Keep checking beans and adding water as necessary. When beans are cooked season with salt and then let go a little longer until they are truly tender.

BISCUITS

4 cups flour

1½ Tablespoons + ½ teaspoon

baking powder

1 teaspoon baking soda

1 teaspoon salt

1½ Tablespoons sugar

6oz cold butter, cut into 1" pieces

1½ cup buttermilk

Whisk the dry ingredients together and then cut in the butter either with a pastry cutter or by hand. When mixture is mealy and butter is well incorporated add the buttermilk. Stir with a wooden spoon and then pull dough together by hand, be careful not to over mix. Pat out biscuit dough to 1½"-2" thick. Using a biscuit cutter or a glass cut the dough into rounds. Bake in a 350° oven until golden.

Buy a great aged cheddar and a spicy brown mustard. †

a SERIES of GESTURES

Originally, this was the story of the repurposing of my uncle's farm in Leeds, Maine. The loss of yet another small farm seemed to be a sad story that needed reporting, if only as an archetype: long-time family farm sells because of economic pressures to compete in the dairy business and the people who buy the place don't farm.

In the few years since the farm was sold I have become increasingly interested in and aware of the struggles facing people who responsibly produce my food. I've changed my relationship to the food I eat. I read agrarian essays and food policy articles. I vote with my fork and I have become acquainted with efforts to get good, healthy, real food to all kinds of people.

In a brief moment of romantic whimsy, I imagined that I inherited my uncle's farm. I would leave the city and begin aggressively growing food and raising animals. I imagined myself an ethical survivalist, efficient enough to produce everything he needs, give the rest away and still has time to write stories or learn to play piano. It is lucky for everyone that the convergence of my gastronomic-agrarian awakening did not coincide with the transfer of our farm. I am a lot of things—currently I am a bartender and a drummer—but I am no farmer and I am still in love with a city that does not readily inspire visions of tractors, coops, barns or cows.

However, I know that I must grow something to eat. To relieve the stress on resources, human energy included, to get to know nature as we have been estranged of late, to learn something new and to put a smile on my face. There are many who feel similarly, and we, speaking to conventions, have no land. The key seems to be enacting small, generous gestures like buying less and making more. For me, this evolution begins with how we feed ourselves.

Buying food grown carefully on a small scale and getting closer to those who produce it is great, but this is the threshold for many of us. The next step is to start producing some of that food for ourselves. "Many people see ecological living as something they will do later, when they can finally afford a big place in the country," writes Heather Flores, author of *Food Not Lawns*.

Her challenge to us is clear: "Even, perhaps especially, if you live in a tiny apartment surrounded by a concrete jungle, you can usually find simple ways to repair the earth." So, as an urban or suburbanite, what resources are available? A whole lot, as it turns out.

In southern Brooklyn two guys dumped thousands of pounds of soil and compost on a blacktop and created a full-fledged farm. There are small-scale organic farms in the Bronx and East New York. Greenthumb NYC has hundreds of community gardens scattered throughout the metropolitan area. In Minneapolis the city's center isn't the courthouses but Dowling Community Garden, the longest continually operating Victory Garden in the country. In cities like Austin, Texas, people tend to vast community gardens that operate on the same rental principle as parking garages.

By seeing through urban architecture and a city's physical infrastructure, people are engaged in reclaiming previously unproductive space. Vacant lots, abandoned buildings and apartment rooftops are being repossessed and made fertile. Not to mention underused "green" space like parks and even parking medians, which often have wild edibles growing in them already. To sow in earnest is the next step. The people of Detroit, Michigan, as far back as 1988, were becoming aware of the fundamental need for citizens to provide for themselves. Grace Lee Boggs, PhD. and her husband Jimmy Boggs, a former labor organizer, spearheaded a crusade to capitalize on the resources offered by a city that many people assumed offered no such gifts. They saw in the dilapidation and ruin the return of nature. Where some see vacant lots, the Boggs saw pastures. These pastures are now fertile thanks to the urban husbandry of groups civic, religious, and educational like 4-H, Earth Works Garden, and the Catherine Ferguson Academy for young girls.

If the citizens of inner Detroit produce what could be the "envy of any organic farmer" then the owners of suburban homes replete with lawns should be motivated to re-examine that place, hitherto underused and perhaps misused. Heather Flores and oth-

by PETER HALE

ers offer a scathing indictment of the lawn. "The more we learned about food, agriculture, and land use, the more the lawns...began to reek of gross waste and mindless affluence."

A short summation of this passive greediness is needed to underscore its vast promise. The manicured lawn is a water-boarding monoculture and its lack of biodiversity is "stabilized" by lavishing the carpet with chemicals to kill unintended species. What water the lawn doesn't bogart runs off to the groundwater and eventually to streams and rivers, with the chemicals included. To top it all off, one must take the top off every week, usually with a gasoline-powered mower that when run for two hours, emits as much carbon into the air as a three hundred mile highway drive in a car.

The lawn has long been the standard of beautiful domesticity in this country, but as people gain interest in where their food originates, standards must change to reflect a new sense of authentic beauty. Diana Balmori, architect and gardener, reminds us that "beauty has many dimensions, and they are not only aesthetic." She asks, "will you look at this established icon deemed beautiful for generations with the same eyes once you know the effects it has on our environment?"

The perspective gained from understanding the lawn's lack of productivity could serve as a model for understanding any place's inherent ability to produce. Suddenly a walk through my neighborhood changed greatly in its tone. The "real" beauty I saw in the city's nooks and lots was the beauty of the great promise. I found out that people in other cities have planted edible perennials and fruit trees in public spaces. Why not here? And here?

Flores sees growing food in lots or lawns or lobbies not only as a necessary remedy for unproductivity but she is "convinced that food—the source of our energy and, often, the root of our consumerism—[is] also at the core of personal and community empowerment." Fritz Haeg insists that his project *Edible Estates* "did not originate from thoughts of lawns or food or gardens. It is only tangentially about these things." *Edible Estates* is indeed a radical revision of the typical American lawn. He muses, "what is that chasm between house and street? Why is it there? Or rather, why is nothing there?" Haeg and colleagues have turned many lawns across the United States and the U.K. into food-producing gardens, each one unique and made to service and flourish in each different eco-setting.

But the inspiration for *Edible Estates* was not initially about food production. He was also compelled to make a gesture that would re-integrate his "insular, self-referential, and hermetic contemporary art and architecture community" with the community at large and be a response to the current environmental and political issues facing all citizens. Much of the inspiration is about empowerment and knowledge. Community gardens are not

just called such. "The whole point is to have people understand that they can do this" he says and adds "this is something that you used to learn from Grandma and Grandpa, not in a book."

The urge to "teach" gardening is, to some, part of the greater gardening philosophy. The wealth of knowledge about food, where it comes from, how and when and where varieties grow and even recipes began to atrophy in the United States after the Second World War. Even as people migrated off farms to the cities in the first half of the Twentieth Century, their agrarian instincts remained intact largely because of two Great Wars and the Great Depression. Victory Gardens in cities and suburban neighborhoods during WWII produced FORTY percent of the food consumed annually. With what is generally described as a period of "great prosperity" immediately following the war, small-scale food growing all but vanished.

What became the modern food industry was well on its way to replacing the accumulated knowledge of seasons and vegetables with at-your-command space food. The irony may be that the prosperous time was not universally felt. To borrow a phrase from Gil Scott Herron "we nearly lost Detroit." Because of its abject state, not in spite of it, the space of neglect and misuse is the perfect model for its alternative-to be made manifest by people who might not have a choice (those soup kitchens who benefit from the efforts of urban farmers) and by those who presumably enjoy the multitude of choice. The bottom line is; hinder or help, take or make. To quote Heather Flores, humanity is sustained by "exponential learning rather than exponential growth, and accumulated wisdom, rather than accumulated wealth."

Much of the ethos of today's efforts of community based farming and gardening is formed to fill this void and to ensure that the collected knowledge is not endangered. Surely farmers will continue to exist, but if the rest of us stand a chance to contribute, the how-to's and the don't do's need to be shared.

I for one have only cursory understanding of how to grow herbs on my fire escape. A tiny gesture really, one that doesn't yield much and isn't straightforward either in meaning or mechanism, but whenever I mention my plants someone within earshot offers advice. Mention the word garden and one might be surprised to hear the responses: "Oh! I'm obsessed with gardening" is a likely rejoinder.

I have met young farmers, orchardists, foragers, ranchers and apiarists. Here, amongst some of us is a wealth of talent and energy devoted to providing for the rest of us. However, the most numerous and varied group of people I have interacted with are gardeners. The motives here touch on survival, idealism, the agrarian spirit, practicality and respite from the contemporary grind. Within the gardener, all of these reside.

A MATTER OR MOUTHFULL



Jess Ardnt & Amos Owens

The light did him harm, but not as much as looking at things did; he resolved, having done it once, never to move his eyeballs again. A dusty thudding in his head made the scene before him beat like a pulse. His mouth had been used as a latrine by some small creature of the night, and then as its mausoleum. During the night, too, he'd somehow been on a cross-country run and then been expertly beaten up by secret police.

He felt bad. — Kingsley Amis

Moonshine, bootleg, white lightning, crazy Mary, popskull, panther's breath, hooch. One night in the hot armpit of a country summer I thrashed through the buggy backdoor and into my bare-bulbed kitchen. My roommate (who also likes taking pictures of himself standing in used car lots wearing Mexican wrestling masks) was making moonshine. There was a mason jar on the table. Clear as water, thick ripples beckoning small greasy hurricanes on its surface.

I drank it.

In the Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue (Francis Grose, 1811), a "matter or a mouthful of moonshine" means "a trifle, nothing." Something so quick it is hardly worth mentioning, something slipped out the side of the mouth. Maybe that's because it's raw or un-aged. Or that it's relatively easy to make. You need corn, some privacy, yeast and water. You also need some kind of still.

Like most things, it started with the Irish. Well, the Scots-Irish anyhow. A group of hill-loving Indian fighters with a thin smattering of German gunsmiths who built the most prized possession of these men: the Pennsylvania long rifle. The second most prized object being a stout copper whiskey still.

Back before highways and railroads the average farmer had little in the way of getting his produce to market. The options were to pack bushel after bushel of corn or apples on the backs of horses and trot to the nearest town to sell his wares. Now most farmers figured out quickly that it wasn't worth the trip for the nominal profit to be made transporting such a small amount of crop, say nothing of the crop left behind to spoil. With a bit of know-how and a copper still however, a man could mash and distill the fruits of his labors and easily truck as much of his crop as he wished without worry of spoilage or marketability as fine liquor is always in demand.

In the height of the Prohibition, there were some 30,000 recorded speakeasies selling homemade bootleg. That's a lot of small sips or slips out of the side of the mouth. DIY stills were everywhere. Poke a bottle into the brambles and bathtubs of rural America and it would almost always come out clear and full. Our country has nursed at the teat of moonshine. Even our literature is soaked with it. Open a southern gothic novel and you will emerge drunk.

Almost a century later, the tradition continues, and is gaining a new kind of ferment. No longer a product belonging only to the unruly Scots who settled in Appalachia, or the mobster and rumrunners who kept our country wet when it was supposed to be dry, moonshine has a new kind of devoted pilgrim—the urbanite. In kitchens all over Brooklyn, in squats in Oakland and San Francisco, home-brewing geeks and alcohol aficionados are flirting with extra-proof liquors made from corn, rye and apple mash.

I am neither a farmer nor a Scotsman but I do have an unquenchable want to figure out the food ways of pre-industrial Americans. With this in mind I bought a still not so different than one might have found in 1700's New England. But the still, while important, is not the key to making a quality product. What does it take, exactly, to make something in a still? Good sense, lack of greed and good ingredients.

Like anything worth

making, you have to start with the best beginnings. Local raw cider is a good start. The yeasts from the skins of the apples ensure that the pressed juice begins to quickly turn hard and ferment when left out of the fridge. The same can be done with honey diluted with off-the-boil water and a bit of wine yeast or a cooked mixture of cracked corn and malted barley.

Anyway you do it, the sugar is what you're after. Sugar, quickly consumed in a week or two by the yeasts, either natural or in small packets, is converted to ethanol in a loosely sealed demi-john or bucket. The result is mash, a potent and wild smelling liquid without which you might as well put a Ficus in your pot still as it will be of no use. The key is to judge the moment it is done working on the yeast and make a run of liquor before it turns to vinegar on you.

Fall is the perfect time for such things as the

weather is cool, the harvests have just come in and there is less danger from a hot spell turning your mash sour. You can mash just about anything if you put your mind to it: ripe squash and pumpkins, corn, late harvest tomatoes. I like buckwheat honey myself. The painfully clear white liquor tastes as dark and funky as a bale of wet hay and awful good if you soak some toasted bitter almonds in it.

Once you have your mash fermented up you have to fill your still and fire it off. Not too full! Two-thirds is about it or else you might get a boil over and blow yourself and your neighbors right to hell. After it's full as I dare make it, I put the cap on it and connect it to a copper coil cooled with water and seal up all the joints with a thick wheat paste. Be careful putting on a nice even coat or the vapors you've worked so hard for will leak out.

Now fire it up low and leave it there if your mash is pulpy. If it's thin you can crank it up after the thing gets going. As soon as it's about to go you'll hear a sound like a simmering pot as the alcohol starts to boil. I make sure the coil water is still cool and then I put a cup under the spout to catch the run. Some stills will give you something that is drinking strength straight away but mine doesn't. After the first run is collected till it stops tasting like anything I'd want to drink I dump the spent mash, wash it out and put in the last few batches of low runs. This is where it can get tricky.

On the final go you can't walk away because it goes fast. When it starts to boil, which is quick, you want to take your first half-cup out of the still and put in a jar for later. Don't drink it; it's got all the blinding stuff in it. After that you're in the money. Now collect it, tasting it every minute off the back of a spoon, until you get into the weak but fruit end of the run. As soon as it starts tasting at all bitter call it quits.

But back to the mouthful.

It's 2006 and I know nothing of stills or stillness. Bush is in the middle of his second horrific term. Trump, in one gauche gesture after another, releases Trump. The World's Finest Super Premium Vodka in a gold-foiled bottle that looks like an upside down pyramid. My roommate in the Mexican wrestling mask is making moonshine. I am thirsty.

I didn't know the alcohol, while easy enough to produce comes with a host of homemade dangers. Found primarily in the "heads" and "tails" of the batch, they must be siphoned off and immediately discarded. When this doesn't happen it can burn your guts out—kill you, make you white-eyed blind.

Mason jars feel good. You see them at parties now. Half full of clear or yellow or white-ish liquid. Maybe it's the push towards local that is churning at the center of our communities. Maybe it's the apocalypse. Who has time to wait for liquor to age?

Drink it now.

I did.

The thick jar lip. The mouthful, and then total complete hot tasting blackness. My roommate was unfinished, about to pass his hooch through the second run. The Moonshiner's test: He wouldn't drink the stuff. I woke in an attic room with two heads staring down at me. I had gone out cold. I was confused. Annoyed. Testy.

I knew how to drink. Didn't they know, I knew how to drink? Secretly, I felt the brush of poisonous feathers, a red-faced half-humbled escape. They said my breath was coming out from underneath me. Like out of a cave. But then there were no nights and no days, just fires without fire pits and videos that were sculptures of videos and we were all obsessed with an unfulfilled desire for something to come clear.



a Solution

WRITTEN BY CERISE MAYO

ILLUSTRATIONS BY BELLA FOSTER

Early in my four-month apprenticeship at Four Season Farm in Harborside, Maine, I found myself harvesting cucumbers side-by-side with my new employer, Eliot Coleman. I was fulfilling a long-held dream of working for someone whose growing practices I have regarded highly for years, and I needed to ask a good first question out of fear of otherwise being seen as some sort of agricultural dilettante. I decided not to waste a moment and asked the one question (or so I thought at the time) that would set me down the right path in order to establish my own farm or market garden in the near future.

"Hey Eliot, would you lease or buy land if you were starting out today?"

Little did I know that it was only the beginning of a discussion that would occur nearly every day in the fields among us apprentices. Given our limited means, burgeoning skills and mostly urban backgrounds, what would make the most sense in establishing some sort of agricultural production of our own?

Eliot told us tales of England's copyhold system, a medieval form of land tenure, whereby land was granted to a peasant by a lord in return for agricultural services. Today in the States there are ample agricultural land trust organizations that help ensure American farmland and aid young farmers looking for land to steward/lease. When it comes to leasing land to farm, Eliot is all for it—and why not? It allows for new farmers to gain their footing, establish a customer base, and start off with a much smaller capital investment. Today and throughout history, stewarding others' land—in its various incarnations—provides a necessary framework for viable agricultural production.

Eliot himself came to Cape Rosier, Maine, by way of Scott and Helen Nearing's homestead, now a non-profit educational center known as the Good Life Center. At the time he was teaching Spanish Literature in New Hampshire and fortuitously came upon the Nearing's now-classic homesteading book, *Living the Good Life*. He soon found his way up the coast to apprentice, which led to them selling him a 60-acre plot of land for the same price the Nearings paid for it, \$33 an acre.

The parcel is every inch what you would imagine Maine coastal land to be—wooded and incredibly rocky. To clear the land, each day Eliot marked off a 10ft x 10ft section, hacked down the pines, and removed the roots and rocks. By noon he amended

the soil and tilled it to prepare the bed for planting, and by nightfall, he had something planted in the ground. By the end of the week, he had a 10ft x 50ft section newly cleared and in production. He did all of this without a tractor. Despite the 40 years that have passed since, his enthusiasm hasn't diminished in the least. "It is the most intellectually stimulating work," he would often tell us.

Coleman's farming practices are borne out of necessity and for what he calls, 'an elegant solution.' To make the most with the land he was given, he needed to devise a system that would provide more than one season's worth of crops. What drives his particular approach to vegetable production is taste. His knowledge of soil health is at the core of the entire operation, as vegetables grown in soil that has been amended properly with careful attention to the trace nutrients and thoughtful crop rotation taste better and have a higher nutritional value.

This is just one approach on one small farm in mid-coast Maine. You can compare small farms as you can snowflakes: no two are alike. From practices and preferences, implementation, volume of production, acreage, the level of state support, marketing and distribution opportunities, growing conditions, soil fertility and location—what is the most exciting aspect of establishing a farm is also the most daunting—the prospect of starting from the ground up. It is a blank canvas.

For many who have grown up removed from any agricultural or land-based heritage, there is now not only a strong pull to steward the land, but perhaps to reframe the approach altogether. Out of necessity comes ingenuity. Today we are enthusiastically creating a veritable patchwork of unique farm and garden operations across the country that bridge urban sensibilities with small-scale crop production and traditional agrarian know-how.

For apprentices, Jeremy Oldfield and Emily Stevenson, time spent working for Eliot has provided the backbone for their new business, Freelance Farmers. So inspired by the work and the land they voluntarily converted the parking area behind their cabin into their own personal trial garden, which they tended to after work or on weekends. There they grew crops that weren't in the farm's regular crop rotation—lemon cucumbers, pumpkins, radicchio.

"When we would tell people we were creating a kitchen garden of our own here at the farm, we always got, 'Isn't that a little redundant?'"

Emily laughs a little. Based now in Berkeley, they are urban dwellers opting to decentralize farming by establishing urban farms and kitchen gardens of all sizes for clients throughout the Bay Area.

In deciding their next steps after the farm, there were a lot of possibilities tossed about. Stay nearby? Maybe help establish a friend's farm? Venture back to school? Both in their mid-twenties, they realized that while they wanted to continue down

this path, what they missed most was having a social life and friends and a coffee shop that didn't require a 35-minute commute.

"I suppose you could say that the business idea was born out of a desire to live in an urban setting and to continue farming. How could we do it? We will farm other people's land," says Emily.

"We want to use our skills to teach others how to farm and to expand ideas about what is possible in an urban area."

Their name, Freelance Farmers, emphasizes that the scope of their services are specific to agricultural production—no matter the size.

"Farming," says Jeremy, "implies a higher degree of productivity and participation. Off the bat, someone understands we have a pragmatic aesthetic, not ornamental. We know farming, and want to apply that logic and layout to small spaces. Besides, a pragmatic aesthetic is still beautiful: clean rows or multicolored lettuce heads, tall wisps of fennel greens..."

Instead of strip malls Freelance Farmers would like to see dozens of Good Life Centers springing up in areas of clustered housing, challenging the notion that living simply and sustainably requires geographic remoteness.

"Because so much of this is changing what you prioritize. We're inspired by black and white photos of American kitchen gardens from the 1930s and 40s—the insurance salesman cultivating lettuces in his undershirt, the military wife harvesting tomatoes along the driveway..." says Jeremy.

For urban farmer Michael Robertson, the new agriculture steward at Queens Farm Museum, he believes his role—and that of urban agriculture more broadly—is to reinvigorate a sense of a shared investment within the community at large. "I want the residents to feel that they are a part of this farm; that our work extends well past Little Neck Parkway and into their local markets, their classrooms, and their kitchens. We are all going to need to be participants in food production in the future, so helping to break down these dichotomies like urban/rural and producer/consumer, which actually don't fit the agricultural model at all, is going to be important."

Queens Farm Museum, a non-profit organization, occupies nearly 50 acres and is New York City's largest remaining tract of undisturbed farmland. Having served more as a demonstration farm in the past, Michael is establishing their four-season vegetable production with nearly 30 crops about to be planted for the winter season, and has secured a spot at Greenmarket to begin selling on a weekly basis. Soon, he hopes to incorporate heritage breeds into their livestock operation for meat consumption.

Michael came to Queens after a year apprenticeship at Hawthorne Valley Farm, a biodynamic dairy and vegetable farm in upstate New York, having previously farmed in Austin, Texas, and in southern Spain. Upon seeking land outside Austin following his apprenticeship, he learned that what he would be able to rent or purchase would be removed other ecologically-oriented producers and far from the local consumer base.

Aligned with the efforts of Freelance Farmers, Michael is eager to see a return to farming in the suburbs, where farms traditionally once were, located just outside the city walls. He concludes that the only way farmers can maintain their vital role within communities is to "cleverly adapt dozens of contiguous acres of both public and private land... The areas of land that will serve as agriculture centers will be corporate office parks, master-planned communities, the parks and open spaces of struggling or failed suburban developments, city and state park land."





Paradoxically, even with this surge of interest in farming and with opportunities to gain skills and land to lease, when it comes to whether there will be enough farmers to supply the demand in the near future, Michael shows great concern. With the average age of US farmers

at 58 and climbing, there will be a shortage over the next decade, he predicts. In an effort to counter the statistic, he proposes a national program—Farm for America, like Teach for America—for the next generation of farmers. “We have apprenticeships and farmhand jobs but we lack the infrastructure on a large scale for the continued support and development of new farmers,” Michael says.

If I think back to how long I have wanted to establish a farm of my own, whether rural or urban, I get the immediate urge to place a seed order with Johnny’s for the coming season and invest in some new work pants—this time lined with knee support. When I was still in grade school, I would spend hours daydreaming ways to improve my immediate ‘natural’ surroundings. Growing up in northern New Jersey in the 80s, it isn’t hard to fathom why. Nearby industrial zones, the Meadowlands Sports Complex, the concrete school playground that doubled as the church parking lot, the city of Newark—there wasn’t much that escaped getting an imagined land-use revision from me.

To some degree I feel this compulsion to want to ameliorate the landscape is inherently shared among the many farmers I now look to for inspiration—the main evolution being that their need to steward the land is anchored in a practiced regard and respect for its natural systems. My desire for a deeper understanding of land stewardship and small-scale agriculture has only grown through the years thanks to their efforts.

Truth be told, a solid plan for my agricultural future is in the hopper. But before charging ahead, I feel a need to revise an unfortunate misnomer that has been looming over countless dynamic growing initiatives for decades. The back to the land categorization sounds similar to someone from the west coast who has always lived there referring to going back east—it is too once removed to have any relevance. Nor does it fully convey the scope of all the farming and gardening permutations I have found to be incredibly inspirational. So, I would like to propose a simplification, just an imperative going forward for all growers big and small, urban, suburban or otherwise, let’s just say: to the land.

