



FROM SCRATCH

{life on the homestead}

April/May 2014

**Sustainable
Living**



Big Dreams Tiny Houses

Why You Should
Care About
What Your
Animals Eat

A Garden
to Dye For

Choosing Your
Chicken Breed



Letter from the Editor and Publisher

As we write this, it is the first day of Spring.

The chickens are laying fresh eggs, we are waiting for goats to kid and we have potatoes, carrots and three kinds of lettuce in the ground.

Of course, we are also waiting for another winter storm to hit the North East, but we're trying not to think about that right now.

Because, it is the first day of Spring and the sun is actually shining.

Finally.

It has been a long, hard winter, to paraphrase, made glorious spring.

This year, probably more than any other, in our brief history as home-

steads and proprietors of this publication, we had to wait a long time for Spring. We've worked harder than we've ever worked before, to get a farm going and to keep a magazine going.

Spring is the time to grow, to clean to get ready for bigger and better things. And that what we plan to do.

And sure, come August, we'll all wonder if the sun will stop beating us down and wish for a cool Fall breeze. It is probably part of the human condition to hope for a better thing.

But for today, and hopefully on many others, we can all stop for a second and be grateful for a sunny, breezy day. We can stop worrying about winter storms and oppressive August days and just enjoy an open

window, a chance to put seeds in the ground and a brand new issue of From Scratch magazine.

While you are flipping through this issue, check out our story about Tiny Houses.

Maybe you want to try something new, like taking your kids to a 4-H meeting? Don't forget to take a look at our regular features: Reader photos, Chicken Scratch with Lisa Steele, ideas on homeschooling from Carol J. Alexander and more.

And we'd like to congratulate Jennifer Burcke, of 1840 Farms, who is now the official From Scratch magazine Food Editor.

Jennifer has been a contributor to From Scratch since the very beginning and we're thrilled to see she's part of the team here.

Welcome!

Happy Spring everyone, and may you have many, many fair weather days this year, with just enough rain and just enough sunlight.

Steven and Melissa



Steven Jones
Editor



Melissa Jones
Publisher



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Your Animals Eat

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Big Dreams
Tiny Houses

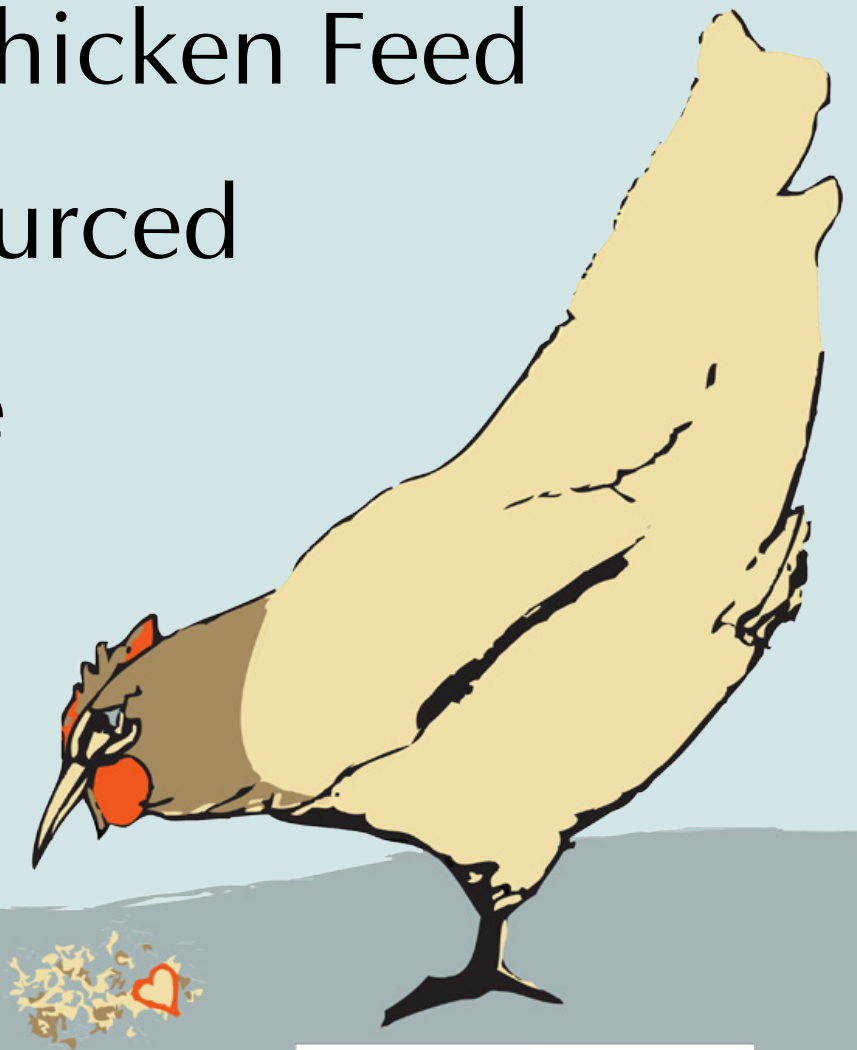
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Choosing
your
Chicken
Breed

Scratch *and* Peck Feeds

you are what your animals

- 🥚 Organic Chicken Feed
- 🥚 Locally Sourced
- 🥚 GMO Free
- 🥚 Soy Free



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in the PACIFIC NW



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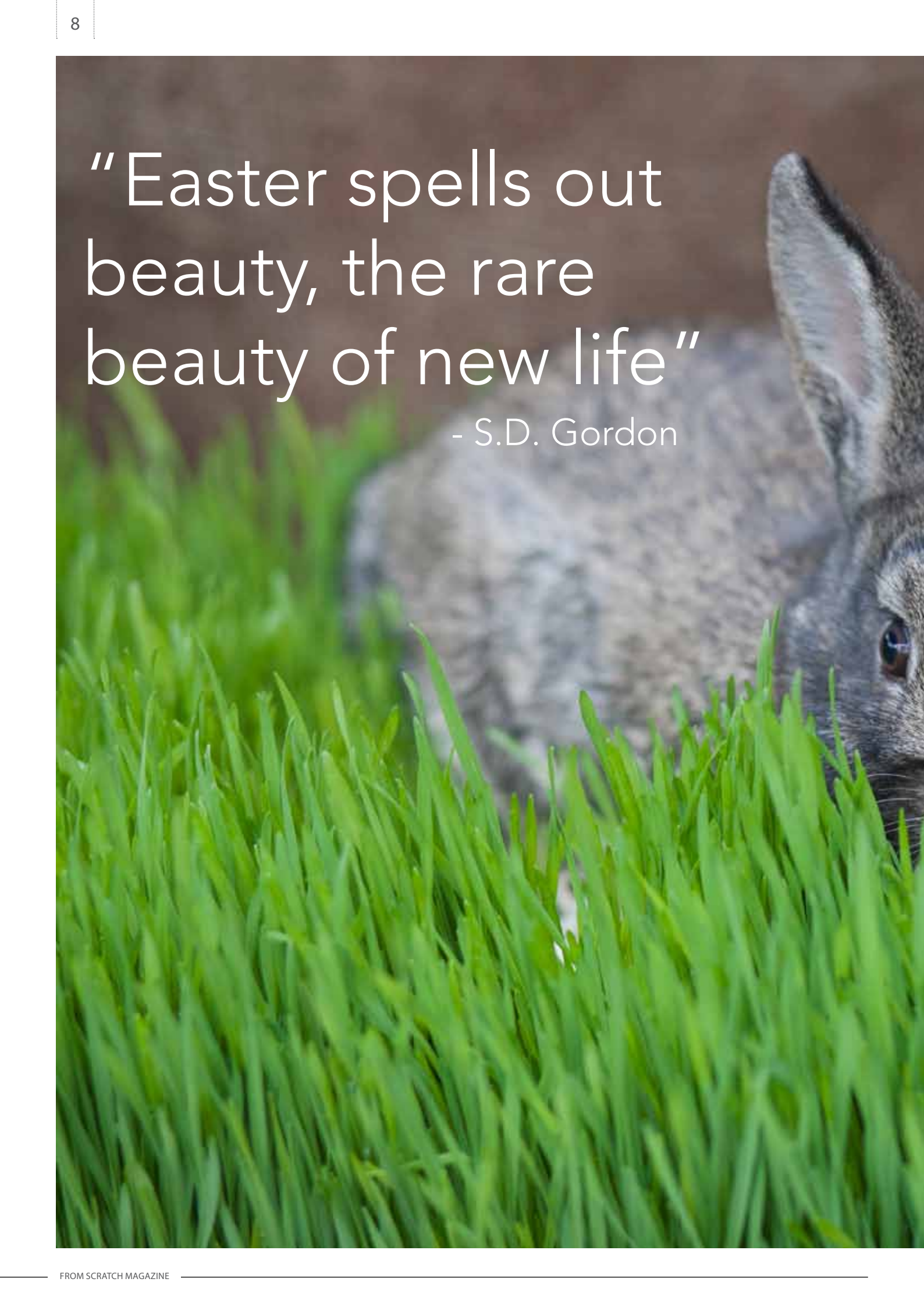
MEL FAULK
Faulk Farmstead



SUSAN
VINSKOFSKI
*Learning and
Yearning*



BIANCA NEILL
Lark Hollow



“Easter spells out
beauty, the rare
beauty of new life”

- S.D. Gordon



Easter Sunday
is April 20



Passover begins
April 14

Reader Photos



Ailee Farey sent us this photo from her farm.



Shannon Paterson shows off "farm girl in training" (age 2). Shannon keeps a backyard homestead with chickens.

Sonja Rasmussen gave us this photo of Gracie and her favorite hen.



Deb Krause, of Heritage Harvest Goats, submitted this picture of her new goat triplets: (L-R) Ringo, Luci and Eddy.



her "little
Shannon
d with 8

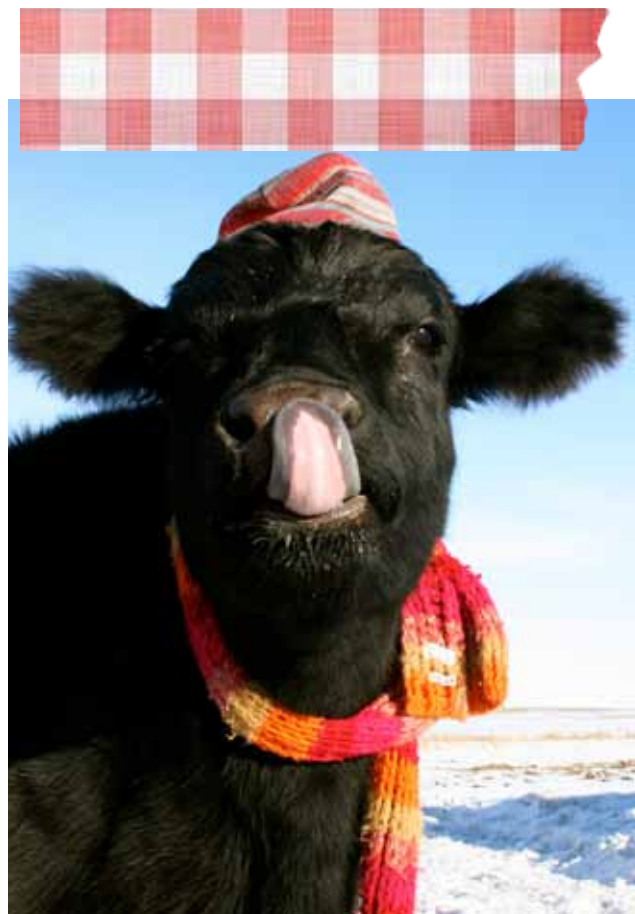


Annie sent us this
photograph of
Spring in East
Tennessee.

Erica Wagner shows
off her egg haul in
Holstein, IA.



Brixy the cow
poses with her
hat and scarf.
She belongs
to Becky Hed-
lund, of North
Dakato. "I be-
lieve she thinks
she is a cross
between a dog
and a horse,"
Becky said.



TIME TO CAMP



Guide Gear Lodge Tent, Amazon.com, \$79.99



Outdoors Survival Kit, Etsy, \$22



Canvas Hiking Bag, Etsy, \$49.99



Texsport Campfire Tripod,
Amazon.com \$36.46



Coleman Speckled Enamelware Dining Kit
(Red) -Amazon.com \$29.99



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Compass
Necklace, Etsy,
\$28



Pillow - Pendleton Wool Fabric, Etsy,
\$68



Yeti Roadie Coolers,
Amazon.com, \$242.95



Old Town Saranac 146 Canoe, Amazon.com, \$715.22

GARDEN MOM



Crate Garden Wagon, Homesteader Supply,
\$174.88



HERBS 5 Illustrated Vintage Silverware Spoon Garden and Plant Markers, Etsy, \$50.00



Never Enough Thyme Garden Sign,
Rustic Reclaimed Wood, Garden Decor, Etsy, \$20

Bogs Women's Rain
Boot, Amazon.com,
\$59.96



Esschert Design Canvas Tool Apron,
Amazon.com, \$19.83

CHICKEN MOM



Egg Shell Pendant, Mosaic Pendant, Hand-made Jewelry, Sterling Silver, \$30



Elizabeth Karmel's 13-inch Porcelain Egg Crate, 12-Egg Capacity, Amazon, \$20.61



Poultry Netting Fencing, Premier 1, prices vary



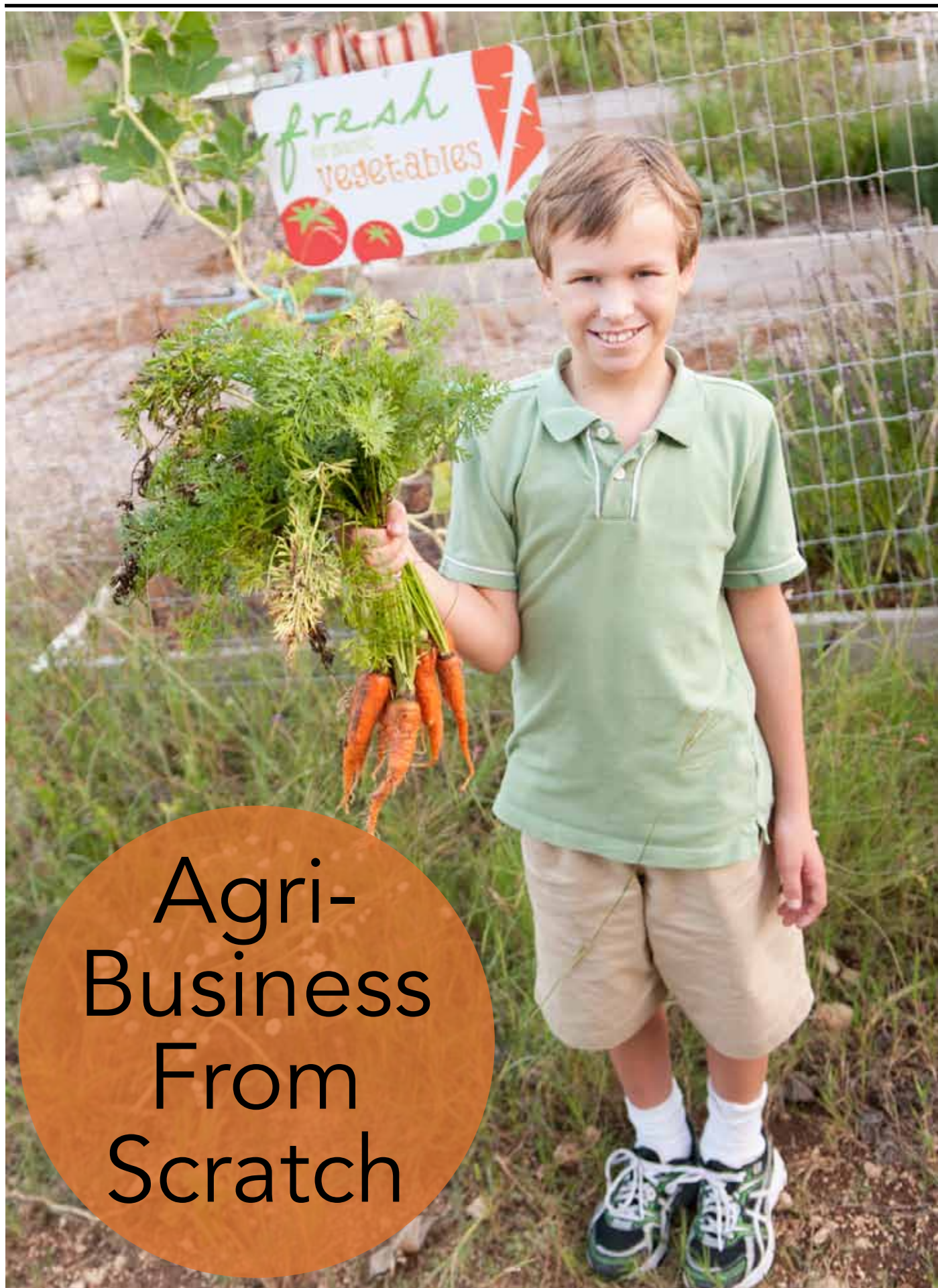
Chick-N-Hutch, Randall Burkey, \$179.99



Pro Series Incubator with Automatic Egg Turner, Randall Burkey, 149.99



Sarut Timer, 1-Pack, Amazon.com \$9.14



Story by Steven Jones • Photos by Amy Anderson

"We've had a blast ..."

- Amy Anderson



We think we're pretty clever here at From Scratch magazine — but we knew, clever as we thought naming our magazine "From Scratch" was, — there would be other companies with the same name.

During our research, we found a couple of "Scratch" magazines, one devoted to hip-hop and the other a UK-based publication devoted to nails. But, we were tickled to death when we were contacted by Amy Anderson of From Scratch Farm.

Amy, along with the rest of her family, makes all-natural beauty products, like lip balm and healing salve, using all-natural products. She also maintains a homestead in Boerne, Texas.

They've been there since August of 2012.

Amy's been in business since July of 2013.

We thought it was neat that a company devoted to all-natural living chose the same name as we did, for our publication devoted to the same principals.

We got a chance to interview Amy Adams recently. Here's what she had to say about living the "From Scratch" life and running a business.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN FARMING/HOMESTEADING?

We started this homesteading process almost the minute we moved out to this acreage (August 2012).

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE CROP TO GROW?

My favorite crop was definitely the green beans! I love green beans & bacon, green bean casserole, fried green beans... anything with green beans!

We also love growing dill. From the



dill, we plucked dozens of caterpillars. And we watched the process of them turning into butterflies over and over. Pretty amazing stuff!

But I'd have to say the favorite overall were the zucchinis. We had no idea that our 5-year-old would love zucchini bread as much as he would. He was so addicted — it became a running joke.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PRODUCT TO PRODUCE AND WHY?

My favorite product is definitely the healing salve. So easy to make! And feels so good on my skin! My feet/heels have never looked better! Even my face has stayed moisturized this winter.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN BUSINESS?

We started the business in July. We purchased the dba, "just in case" we decided we wanted to start selling our eggs or our handmade products.

HOW DID YOU COME TO NAME YOUR FARM/BUSINESS "FROM SCRATCH"?

We chose the name because we had become "obsessed" with making our meals from scratch.

CAN YOU GIVE US A BRIEF BIO OF YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY?

My husband, Nathan, and I have been married for 13 years. He is a product manager director for Rackspace, a large web-hosting

company. He has been with the company for 13 years.

I am a children's portrait photographer. I have had this business (Shutter-Happy Photography) for almost 10 years.

Our oldest son (10-years-old) is Benjamin. He is a 5th grader, Boy Scout, and 4H member.

Our youngest son (5-years-old) is Evan. He is a kindergartener and a 4H Clover Kid.

We have lived in Boerne Texas for 13 years — 11 of those years was right in the middle of town.

We moved out to seven acres just over a year ago. With this new land, we started a beautiful raised-bed garden (and) had great success with green beans, zucchini, tomatoes, pumpkins, squash, peppers, and all kinds of herbs.

With this garden, we just had to start a compost bin.

This compost bin led to a chicken coop and our chicken adventure. We've had a blast raising six chickens from one-week-old chicks to laying hens.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO GO INTO BUSINESS?

In the midst of all of this, I found I was being drawn to purchase better food at the grocery store, grow and make-from-scratch everything we could, recycle, catch rainwater and even dabble in some homemade body products.

This all led to the crazy notion we could start up another business, a family business. The process started in July. First we started the Facebook page, sharing links to articles



about homesteading, sharing photos of what we were up to at our house, and sharing our favorite recipes. After we developed a small group of followers, we began to let them know about the products I was about to make and start selling.

And it's grown from there. Our lip balm is just a couple of oils, beeswax, and essential oils. It glides over lips smoothly. And does a great job at moisturizing. Our body scrubs are just sugars, oils, and essential oils (maybe some honey too). The

sugars are abrasive, while the oils moisturize the skin.

Our healing salves are just oils, beeswax, and essential oils. This is a thick balm, that feels great on dry skin. And thanks to the essential oils we chose to use, the balm has some healing properties to it. We've used it for our cracked heels and rashes, as well as just like a lotion.

Our laundry detergents are made up of several great cleaning ingredients. We have loved the look and smell of our clothes, right out of the wash.

And we're also selling our eggs from our six chickens. We have participated in a handmade market and a market days event. We have been selling online from our etsy store, as well as in-person at our retail space. And we hope to join the local farmer's market this year.

ONE THING I LIKE TO SHARE:

I don't like eggs. Other than for my baking, I don't touch eggs.

So when my husband and older son came to me with the idea of having our own chickens, they really had to talk me into it.

Not thrilled then, but I adore those chickens now. With sweet and funny personalities, we totally consider them pets.

Now we're talking about raising goats.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT FROM SCRATCH FARMS

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From Scratch Farms on Facebook

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Lessons in the Kitchen

By Carol J. Alexander

One of the easiest places on the homestead to begin teaching your children is the kitchen. The kitchen is full of math, science, language, and life-skills lessons. Since we already spend so much time there, why not make it a learning opportunity? If this long winter still has your family trapped inside, head to the kitchen, bake something, and learn in the process.

Using food for math

Gather all your measuring cups and a canister of rice. Have your youngster measure out two half-cups of rice into a bowl. Then, show him how that amount will fill the one-cup measure. Do the same thing with two quarter-cups, four quarter-cups, three third-cups, etc.

A similar activity can be done with liquid measure. Using your canning jars, how many pints make a quart? How many quarts make a gallon? How many ounces are in each?

Making cookies? Measure out a cup of chocolate chips. Ask junior to guess how many chocolate chips are in the cup. Then let him count them. If you have more than one child, let them each make predictions and chart a graph of their predictions, the actual amount, and the difference.

Take that cup of chocolate chips and line them up in rows of five. How many rows of five do they make? You can tell from this that four rows of five (4×5) equal 20 chocolate chips. You can create many multiplication and division problems like this.

Science in the kitchen

We all know what happens when we mix baking soda and vinegar, but why? And how does this explain the use of baking soda in baked goods? Read this article on the Binghamton University's Ask a Scientist website with your child and discuss it. Then, bake something together calling for baking soda in the recipe.

Gardening is a big part of living on the homestead. To explain what happens to a seed once planted, try growing some sprouts with your kids. You can find instructions for growing sprouts here.

Sprout some larger seeds like sunflower or mung bean. Have your kids create a poster showing the different stages of growth by drawing first the seed, then the seed with the little sprout starting to emerge, up until the sprout has shed the seed casing and has its two little leaves on the top. Have them label their drawings and label the poster with the names of each stage of growth.

What happens to liquid when it freezes? Fill a plastic container three-fourths full of water and put in the freezer. The next day, take it out and look at it. Discuss how it expanded. Research why it does. Use this lesson to explain why we disconnect hoses and store them for the winter. We pressure can food of low acidity. Discuss the difference between an acid and a base and the difference between water bath canning and pressure canning with your child. Ask him which foods he thinks should be pressure canned. Then use some pH test strips to test different foods to

see if his predictions are correct.

Food: some folks' love language

Remember the story of The Little Red Hen? I love that children's story. Read it with your kids and talk about the importance of working together as a team and as a family. Then, make some bread together.

Have your child write her own recipe. Reference a recipe book for the proper form. Check it for proper sentence structure and spelling. If she used abbreviations, are they correct? Once it is done, test it out in the kitchen.

One of my favorite cookbooks is *Squash: A Country Garden Cookbook* by Regina Schrambling. I love this book because it has beautiful photographs that make the ordinary squash look noble.

Schrambling writes as though she

is as intimately acquainted to the pumpkin and zucchini as she is with her dearest friends. Do you have any specialty cookbooks in your cupboard? Read them together and then have your child write about a food that she is passionate about. It could be a fruit, bread, or an ethnic food.

Create a list of vocabulary words and have the kids look them up in the dictionary and copy the definitions. Here are a few to get you started: sauté, whisk, broil, mince, julienne, al dente, platter, quiche, wok, pestle, carafe.

All of these exercises are great for extra-curricular work. But don't forget that children learn best by doing. And they will do best at mom's or dad's side. So if you are in the kitchen cooking supper, grab a little one, sit him on a stool, and give him a job to do. Not only will he learn to cook, he'll reinforce academic skills as well.

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10 Reasons to Love Chickens

By: Mel Faulk





Chickens.
The gateway drug
of farming.

At least, that's how it was
for me. When my dreams of
farming first took hold, what
was the first thing I wanted?
A few chickens.

You know, just enough to get
a few eggs. Nothing crazy.

Not like twenty-something
chickens.

Well, whoops! I guess that's
where we ended up, huh?

1. Chickens are easy

They require the basics: Food, water, and shelter — and these can be as simple or extravagant as you choose them to be. We used a mobile shelter, which covers all the bases for us: Open floor for dropping to fall out, shelter from the weather, and mobility to transport around the pasture. Even as little chicks, easy peasy.

2. They are happy to see you

There is not much that's better than seeing them sprint across the pasture when they see you coming. Yes, I know. It is because I bring them food. But I also believe it is due to my sparkling personality and sweet voice. Either way, they're happy — and I'm flattered.

3. The taste of their eggs: Exquisite

After having fresh farm eggs, you really can't go back to the store-bought stuff. I've always been a yolk-person, but I never knew that egg yolks could be like this! So bright and big — and flavorful!

4. Pest control

When we moved onto our property, there was a major fire ant problem out in our pasture and woods. After fencing the pasture and sticking the chickens out there, the fire ant mountains were demolished. Completely cleared. Thank God!

5. They love my clabbered milk

I drive out about 35 minutes away every week or so to pick up fresh milk from the farmer that we purchased our cow Sally from. That milk is precious to me, but occasionally we don't get it all drank up before it starts tasting a tad "off". However, if I leave it out on the counter for a couple more days and allow it to clabber, I have the happiest chickens in the world. The sight of them chowing down on that stuff, flinging it all over and on themselves - Hilarious, I tell you.

6. The taste of pastured chicken is indescribable

Ok, I know this probably wasn't something you were expecting on this list, but it had to happen. We had the aggressive rooster that had to go. If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't raise meat chickens. The taste was like nothing I had had before. Definitely not like the chicken I had purchased at the supermarket. It was moist, flavorful, dark — Mmmmmmm....

7. They are feisty

Have you ever come upon a chicken sitting stubbornly on a pile of eggs? No? Not a pretty sight if she wants to keep those eggs there. The noise that comes out of her is something akin to what a pterodactyl would sound like. But this is a good thing. I respect that protective instinct. I

got your back girl — Just give me those eggs.

8. Amazing fertilizer

Do you know how amazing chicken fertilizer is? One of the best out there! And free! Well, for me, at least! We move our mobile coop around the pasture during most of the year, in order to fertilize the entire pasture. During the winter months, like now, we have the bottom of the coop closed up to prevent drafts on the ladies. Then at the end of winter, we have a nice stockpile of chicken droppings that has been composting down using the deep litter method.

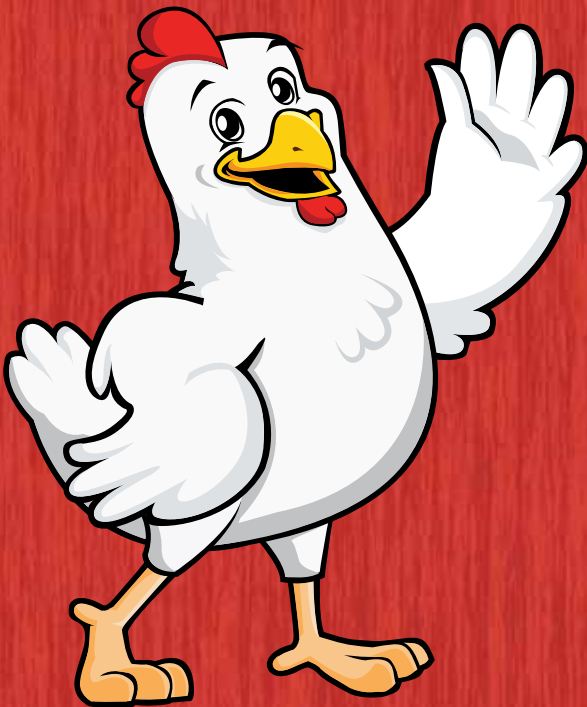
9. When the big chickens run, they look like linebackers

Really! One of these days, I shall get a video for you. Promise.

10. They are just plain good entertainment

I love that each of our chickens has different personalities. I love that I can spend the day looking out my kitchen window, watching their crazy antics. They are friendly, sweet, spunky — AND I LOVE THEM!

Truly couldn't imagine a farm without them!



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TALKING CHICKEN SCRATCH WITH LISA

FROM FRESH EGGS DAILY

BY: LISA STEELE

Q: Now that our chickens are laying well again and we have lots of extra eggs, I want to make deviled eggs, but every time I hard boil a dozen eggs, I can't get them to peel.

I've been told I should let my eggs sit for a few weeks to get old and then they will peel just fine but doesn't that kind of defeat the purpose of raising chick-

ens for their fresh eggs? Help!

A: Very fresh eggs can be hard to peel because air hasn't had time to permeate the shell. There are actually two membranes inside an egg and as air flows through the shell as the egg gets older, it gets trapped between the two membranes. Then when you hard boil the egg, the shell is

easy to get off because the inner membrane has shrunk away from the outer membrane and shell.

Here's the trick to peeling fresh eggs: Steam them in a double boiler, vegetable steamer basket or bamboo steamer for twenty minutes.

Simply place the eggs into the steamer basket once the water underneath has come to a boil. Wait 20 minutes.

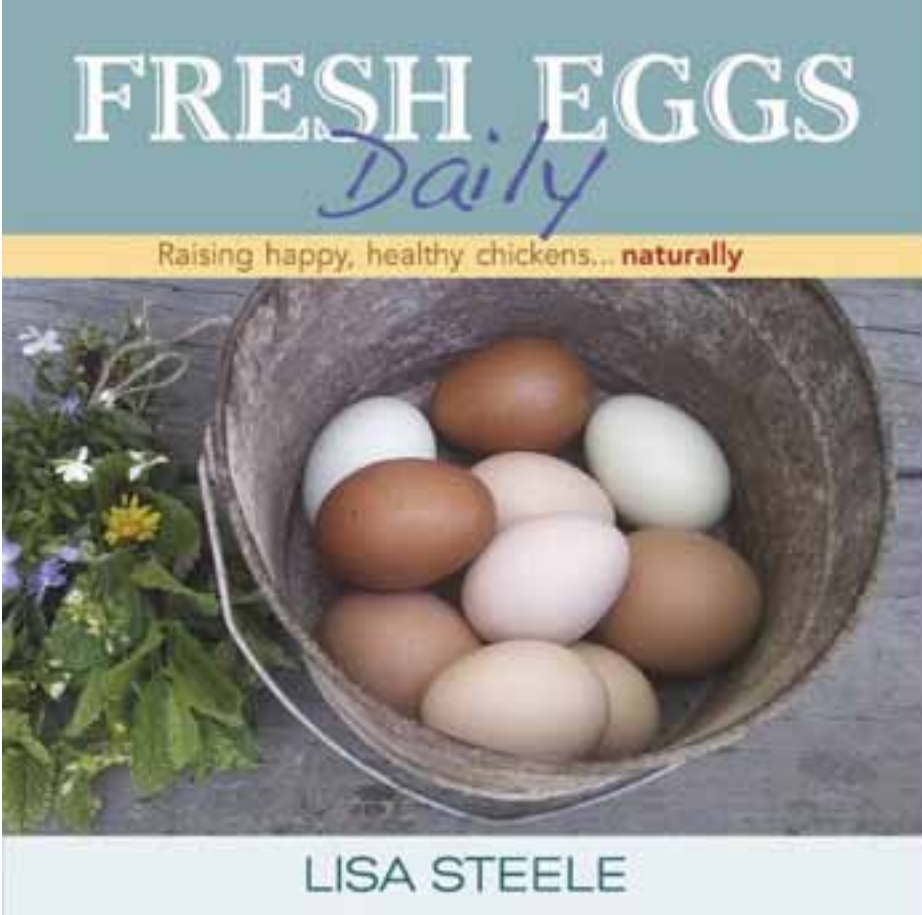
Then place them into a bowl of ice water until they are cooled. The shells will peel off with no trouble, leaving you with beau-

tiful eggs to use in your favorite deviled egg recipe.

Q: Should I use a red or a white heat lamp for my chicks in the brooder?

A: A red light bulb reduces the stress on baby chicks and helps prevent them from pecking at each other.

I sometimes use a white light by day and switch to a red light at night, which does seem more soothing. A white light reminds me of an interrogation room - and that would stress me a bit too!



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BIG DREAMS TINY HOUSES

BY: STEVEN JONES PHOTOS BY: TUMBLEWEED TINY HOUSES



We're going to assume – if you're reading this magazine – you approach things a little differently.

You care, at least marginally, about living a lifestyle that we humbly suggest is a little smarter than other people in your city or town.

You want to eat better, work better, spend time better, live better.

So, you look for ideas outside the status quo.

Well, here's a good one: How about you get rid of most of your earthly possessions, downsize your entire life and move into a home about a frac-

tion of the size you're probably living in now.

Something along the lines of a few hundred square feet.

Seem extreme?

Maybe not, at least according to the people of Tumbleweed Tiny Houses. Tiny Houses are part of a movement by people who are trying to live differently. They discard McMansions and massive mortgages for a chance to live in homes which appear to be built for children, in many cases.

There's a wide spectrum of tiny house ideas: Some are made en-



tirely from discarded materials, others – like Tumbleweed Tiny Houses – are built on wheels and others are just re-purposed campers.

It's not what they're made of that define the houses, or even the size (there's no real agreed upon size for what determines a tiny house). It's the philosophy behind it.

"It's about how much I can get rid of and still have what I need," Art Cormier said at a recent Tumbleweed Tiny House workshop.

Tumbleweed sells Tiny Houses on wheels in various stages of construction. The company also sells Tiny House – and cottage – plans for people who want to build their home themselves (Tumbleweed defines

Tiny Houses as 200 square feet or smaller and cottages as anything up to 800 square feet).

The company also hosts workshops all over the country, so that novice builders can meet with people like Art (Art practices what he preaches: He built his own Tiny House about two years ago) and find out everything they need to know to build their own. While they're at it, workshop attendees can get discounts on Tiny House plans and network with fellow builders.

Tiny Houses tend to draw a broad range of people – including architects, contractors and retirees – which allows people attending Tumbleweed workshops to meet people who can help with all aspects of

building.

More than anything, it gives people a chance to find out exactly what it takes to live in a Tiny House. It's not for everyone.

"Don't think you're going to take your big house living style and move into a tiny house and be happy," Art said. "The house is not what has to change, you have to change."

That means doing more with less, living with a smaller carbon footprint and giving up "stuff."

Once you start researching Tiny Houses, you'll find yourself looking around your own house and thinking about how many things you currently have that you really don't need.

And, according to Debby Richman, of Tumbleweed Tiny Houses, that's just one of the benefits.

"The main benefit from tiny house dwellers is the sense of freedom they gain," she said. "It comes from living in a home where everything has its place, knowing they are able to live on or off the grid, having the economic freedom to decide how to spend their time, and focusing on what matters to themselves and their families."

In addition, living in a Tiny House reduces a homeowner's carbon – and geographic – footprint and costs a lot less.

"(It costs) perhaps \$30 per month for all utilities when living in a four-season location," Debby said.









And, if you want to go off the grid, Tiny Houses may be a solid bet.

"After investing in solar panels," Debby said, "off the grid costs are small. What's interesting is you may still remain plugged into society with cell phones, TV, appliances and more. Tiny Homes allow you to define what is self-sustainable."

And that's what it is really all about: Living a life that is intentional, instead of reactive.

Tiny Homes, while radical, may be exactly what you need.

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Essential oils are the extracted oils of plants are part of an herbal healing tradition which goes back thousands of years.

They are called “essential” because they present a strong scent of the original plant, the “essence.”

The process to make the oils is usually steam distilled, although most citrus oils are expressed. That means steam is passed through plant material which evaporates the natural oils. It takes a lot of plant material to create essential oils. It can take hundreds of pounds of plant material just to make a few pounds of essential oils.

The steam that passes through the

plant material then gathers in a condenser, where it cools and the oil/water mixture drips into a collector. The oil, which doesn’t mix with water, is then separated and collected.

Cold expression of oil means puncturing the peel or flesh of a fruit, then pressing it to remove the oil. At least a little of the juice is removed, which must then be separated.

The oils are used in much the same way their herbal counterparts are, but because of the processes used to produce them, they are often concentrated, which means they pack a lot more bang for their size.

Essential oils are usually sold in small amounts, but they can be used in quantities as small as a single drop,

with the full impact of the plant.

Essential oils have been a part of natural healing since at least the First Century, where they are mentioned by a Greek physician in a pharmacopeia that was used in Europe.

Essential oils can be used in aromatherapy, where the scent of the oils is used to create a specific impact in a person (mentally, physically or emotionally).

They can also be applied topically. Applying the oils usually requires the use of a carrier oil: Any light, inert and food-grade oil that won't interfere with the essential oil's use.

Almond, coconut and olive oils are often used.

There are a few things you have to keep in mind when purchasing essential oils.

Purity

Some essential oils are diluted with carrier oils. If you're aware that the oil you're purchasing is diluted, and are fine with it (maybe you don't want to mix your own oils) then it is not a problem.

Mixing your own essential oils with carrier oils, however, is an easy pro-

cess and a great way to save money, as you can buy an essential oil and dilute it as much or as little as your needs allow.

Source

Let's be honest and a little judgmental for a moment.

Using essential oils and herbal preparations are a great way to live a more intentional life. If you're trying to do so, then you should care about where the products you consume come from, and essential oils, which are widely available from a lot of great, sustainable, fair-trade sources are a good way to start caring.

Again, if you don't know, ask. And try to do a little good with your purchase by supporting companies that agree with your ideals and principals.

Strength

By knowing the standards a distributor requires for their essential oils, you can be sure the methods used to extract the oils (steam distilled, cold expression, etc.) produce the strength required for your essential oils.



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Lavender

Lavender has a fresh, floral aroma. It is a classic ingredient in soaps and perfumes. It helps alleviate stress, induces sleep and helps overcome anxiety. Antiseptic. Anti-inflammatory, spasmodic, anti-depressant, and stimulates new cell growth. Excellent preventative against infections. Mild enough to use by the drop on cuts, scrapes, bruises, sprains, and insect bites. Blends well with many oils adding a smooth, sweet top note.



Eucalyptus

Cool, clear and exceptionally refreshing. Eucalyptus is effective as a vapor rub and air disinfectant for colds and flu. It dilates nasal and bronchial passages and is a mild stimulant and antiseptic. It is also a beneficial analgesic for sore muscles. It blends well with peppermint, lemon and lavender.



Peppermint

Peppermint is stimulating, refreshing and bright. It is an anti-inflammatory and antiseptic. Used for indigestion and nausea. Excellent for some headaches, fever, colds and flu. Soothing in steams or massage oils. Classic breath freshener. Blends well with lavender, rosemary, citrus and rose.



Geranium

Geranium is a refreshing and relaxing oil that is clear to light green. It helps restore balance and harmony. Mildly sweet, fresh and warm. Works well with the nervous system. Mild analgesic, sedative, astringent, and skin tonic. Blends well with rose, citrus, rosemary, lavender and basil.



Tea tree is an impressive and powerful oil with anti-viral, anti-bacterial and anti-fungal properties. Used for infections, sunburn, acne, athlete's foot and many other applications. Do not use on inflamed, broken or sensitive skin.



Rosemary

Physical and mental stimulant. Blend with carrier oil for a soothing hair conditioner. Invigorating massage or bath oil. Effective preservative. Stimulates memory and mental faculties. Good for muscular sprains, arthritis and rheumatism. Do not use if you have high blood pressure.

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5 Ways to Use Essential Oils

1. Diffuse

Diffusing oils is one of the most effective ways to receive the therapeutic benefits of essential oils. By using an essential oil diffuser you will not only have a great smelling home but you will also purify and cleanse the air of harmful bacterial, viruses and pathogens. It is a great way to give your immune system a boost, reduce stress and improve mood. Diffusers come in all shapes in sizes. [Click here to see a selection of diffusers.](#)

2. Make Your Own Beauty Products

A great way to incorporate essential oils in to your everyday life is to make your own beauty products. Not only are homemade beauty products more economical but you also know exactly what ingredients are used and when adding essential oils you get the added benefits of the plant.

3. Make Your Own Cleaning Products

Use distilled water and lavender to make a bed linen spray. You can also make your own dryer sheets. Use an old white t-shirt cut into 5"x5" squares and drop 1-5 drops of your preferred essential oil on the fabric. Use it as you would a store bought dryer sheet. Your laundry will smell divine! Mix a 16 oz. box of baking soda with 10-20 drops of essential oils to eliminate odors and to use as a carpet deodorizer.

4. Experience the Health Benefits

Nausea, cold sores, sore feet, headaches, teeth grinding, flu, colds, cramps, cuts, scrapes, snoring, anxiety, depression. You name it and there is a mixture of oils that has been created to treat it. As with any health regimen it is recommended that you seek the advice and counsel of your health professional before beginning any health treatment.

5. Make Your Own Gifts

Living a life From Scratch we are always looking for ways to give some of our lifestyle to others. Making gifts using essential oils is a perfect way to spread the values and benefits of sustainable living.



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Samantha McClellan is an apartment homesteader and blogger in North Carolina. As a childbirth doula, a promoter of a healthy lifestyle and natural living, her blog, Sweet Potatoes and Social Change which serves as a source of information and inspiration.

Since 2011, when she was diagnosed with a serious autoimmune disease, she turned toward embracing natural living and a natural diet as a way of promoting health and social change.

Outside of blogging, McClellan also has a degree in human development, works at a store specializing in cloth diapers and other natural, sustainable products for mothers and babies and also works as a nanny.

When she's not changing the world, Ms. Samantha enjoys spending time with her family, cooking and being in nature.

We got a chance to exchange a few emails with her recently to talk to her about her blog and life.

When did you start blogging? Why?

I started blogging in February of 2013. I went back and forth on the idea for months and months. Did anyone really care about what I had to say? I wasn't an expert in health,

cooking, cleaning or gardening. What qualified me to publish a single word on any of these topics? In the end however, I started the blog because I was surrounded by people who wanted to make positive changes in their lives but who felt like it would be too hard. I wanted to show people that it doesn't have to be hard. Learning to cook can happen one dish at a time; you don't have to be a master chef. Paying off debt happens through saving one penny at a time, not winning the lottery; and taking control of your health can happen in your kitchen, you don't have to spend your life in a doctor's office. This is what I strive to convey to people through my blog.

How long have you been involved in homesteading?

My journey to homesteading was a gradual one. I began eating paleo in January of 2012 and as I began to see the personal effects of eating a nourishing diet, I started investigating other areas of my life that could improve with simplification. By January of 2013 I was ready to take the full plunge into homesteading and I began growing and preserving some of my own food on my apartment patio, making many of my own household and cosmetic products, composting, and reducing my consumption of resources.

Why did you get started in homesteading?

One of the biggest catalysts of my full plunge into the homesteading lifestyle was reading the book "Radical Homemaking" by Shannon Hayes. I had already begun to dabble with bits and pieces of homesteading, but this book really brought it all together for me. This was the first time I was able to see homesteading as a means of social change. I was discontent with the direction I saw my life and our culture heading and I wanted to change it. I didn't want to use homesteading as a means of hiding or backtracking to the "good old days". Rather, I wanted to use it as a means of embracing the present and advocating for a better future, a future that fused the wonder of technological advancement and modern medicine with the tried of true wisdom of nature and past generations.

What are your plans for the future?

Homesteading has changed my plans for my future tremendously. Prior to embracing homesteading, I was in graduate school on track for a very traditional career working 9-5 in an office. I have since left graduate school and changed my path to one that allows for more flexibility and is focused on creating a more healthy and sustainable community. Outside of homesteading and blogging I am very active in the natural childbirth

community and plan to continue my work in that arena. My husband and I currently live in an apartment as a means of saving money and paying off debt, with the goal of living a simplified and debt free life. However, once this goal is accomplished I would love to establish a permanent homestead and begin to venture into the realm of raising small livestock and expanding my garden. I feel as though the possibilities are endless.

Why paleo?

In 2011 I was diagnosed with Ulcerative Colitis, a debilitating and lifelong autoimmune disease. About six months later, after going on and off a handful of serious medications, I was introduced to the paleo diet. The concept just made sense to me. I believed that my body had not learned how to attack itself without environmental factors interfering, and that perhaps if I started working with my body and nourishing it the way it was designed to be nourished, my health would improve. Through following a mostly primal diet, many of my symptoms went away quickly and my health did greatly improve. However, after more than a year of better health, I began to get sick again and after six months of symptoms that left me almost bedridden, I once again turned to my diet and began following a subset of the paleo diet called the Autoimmune Protocol or AIP. Within three weeks my symptoms were gone and I had my life back. I will never cease to be



amazed at what an effective medicine food can be.

How does home-steading fit in with eating a paleo diet/living paleo?

The paleo diet isn't really a diet. For me, it has nothing to do with losing weight, counting calories, or fitting into a new dress. It is about getting back to the basics and living in a way that promotes nourishment of body

and soul. The paleo diet encompasses everything from the food you eat, to managing stress, to gaining an awareness of your circadian rhythm. As I moved through the process of evaluating all of these areas of my life, I had to become educated on how my food was produced, what aspects of my life needed to be simplified to reduce stress, and how to produce things that I needed that couldn't be found in stores such as fully natural cleaners and cosmetic products. I feel like it would be virtually impossible to fully commit to promoting health through a nourish-



ing, real food diet without at least dabbling in homesteading!

What is your favorite thing to grow and why?

I would love to have a fruit tree if I could — that is the thing I am most longing to grow on a future homestead. However, given my current apartment-based limitations, I have to say that spinach is actually my favorite thing to grow. Spinach was the first food I planted in my garden when I first started growing food, and I was so fully invested in its well-being it was laughable. It also does very well in the shade of our patio.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

My biggest piece of advice for anyone looking to start down the path toward homesteading, the paleo diet, or any other related lifestyle change would be to start gradually. You don't need to go out and buy 100 acres of land and some livestock on day one. If you take it one step at a time, work with what you have and institute changes gradually it doesn't have to be overwhelming or hard. You have today's community of like-minded people and all of the past generations of yesterday backing you up. You can improve your health and happiness and you can promote change one small step at a time.



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Hands On, Hearts Full:

*4 Reasons Your Homeschool
Kids Should Be "4-H"ers*

By: Bianca Neill



18 USC 707

4-H is the largest out-of-school youth program in the United States with over 7 million members and 500,000 teen and adult volunteers. The organization serves millions of youth and adults each year, operating in over 80 countries (National 4-H Headquarters 2004) (1).

4-H and the cooperative extension began at the turn of the century to help improve life and farming in rural areas by introducing improved methods of farming and homemaking. Modern 4-H youth clubs go far beyond canning and hog raising, with computer and engineering focused clubs popping up around the country, it is an opportunity for children to not only work as a team with their peers but to give back to their communities. Here are my top four reasons your homeschoolers should be involved in 4-H.

1. Hands on Life Skills

When I was a 4-Her, my daily homeschool curriculum was 50% 4h workbooks, raising goats, tracking their progress, preparing them for the fair, planning meetings, (since parents were never in charge of meetings). The club president was accountable for order and also for delegating to the other members. From a young age, you get a sense for reaching goals as a team. 4-H as a curriculum is wonderful and enhances the homeschooling/homesteading kids' life experience.

2. A Heart For the Community

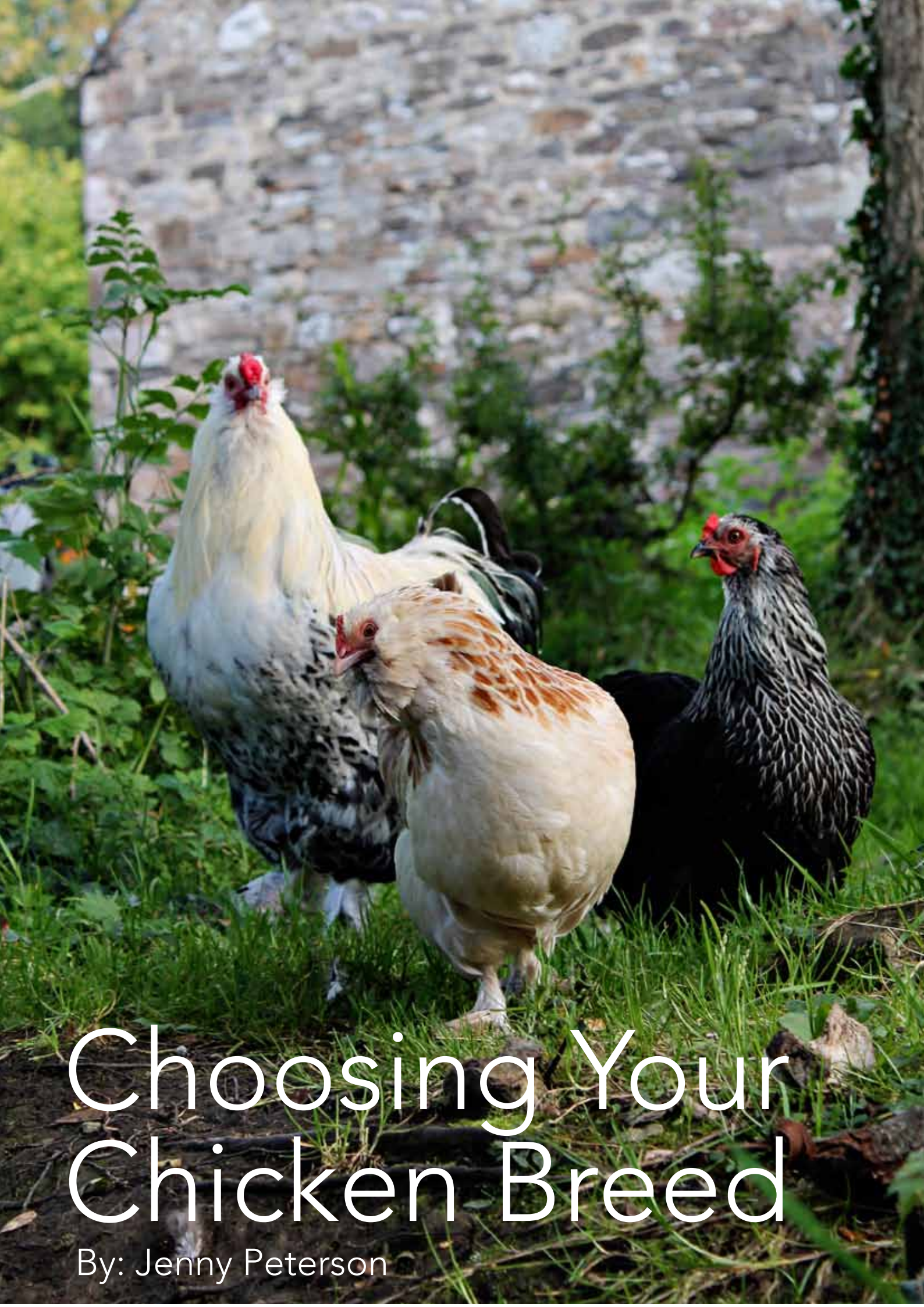
On leaving for college I was shocked and amazed at how few people I went to University with had zero community service in middle and high school. The great thing about 4-H is the sense of community you get and the many ways you can give back! Our 4-H group visited a nursing home every other weekend with homemade cheese cakes and usually presented a talent show, it was an opportunity to give back, but the lessons we received from the residents we visited was much greater than what we gave.

3. Healthy Relationships

4-H forges healthy relationships for kids and teens and friendships that last a lifetime. While Homeschoolers have many diverse ways of socializing and building friendships, 4h is another opportunity for working with a diverse group of peers. Conversely, it also creates a sense of independence and confidence in children that will follow them into adulthood.

4. Creates Thinkers

4-H Gives Homeschool students an opportunity to put their well honed creative thinking skills to good work and with incentive opportunities like year end awards for projects, yearly fair projects and demonstrations. All in all 4-H is a great addition to any child's life, but for the homeschooler living on a homestead it is an absolute must!! For more info contact your local cooperative extension or visit <http://www.4-H.org/youth-development-programs/>



Choosing Your Chicken Breed

By: Jenny Peterson



If you're new to chicken-raising and are getting ready to make your first chicken purchase, you may be tempted to run to the feed store and buy a bunch of baby chicks based upon their impossible cuteness alone. But that would be a mistake — understandable, but a mistake nonetheless, and one we are hoping to help you avoid. Different chicken breeds have a wide variety of features that make them a perfect choice for one person but an unwise one from another, so check out this Hen version of Senior Superlatives to choose the chicken breed that's best for you.

MOST PRODUCTIVE

Many people want chickens that lay tons of eggs, but some breeds are more prolific than others. If lots of eggs are important to you, look for

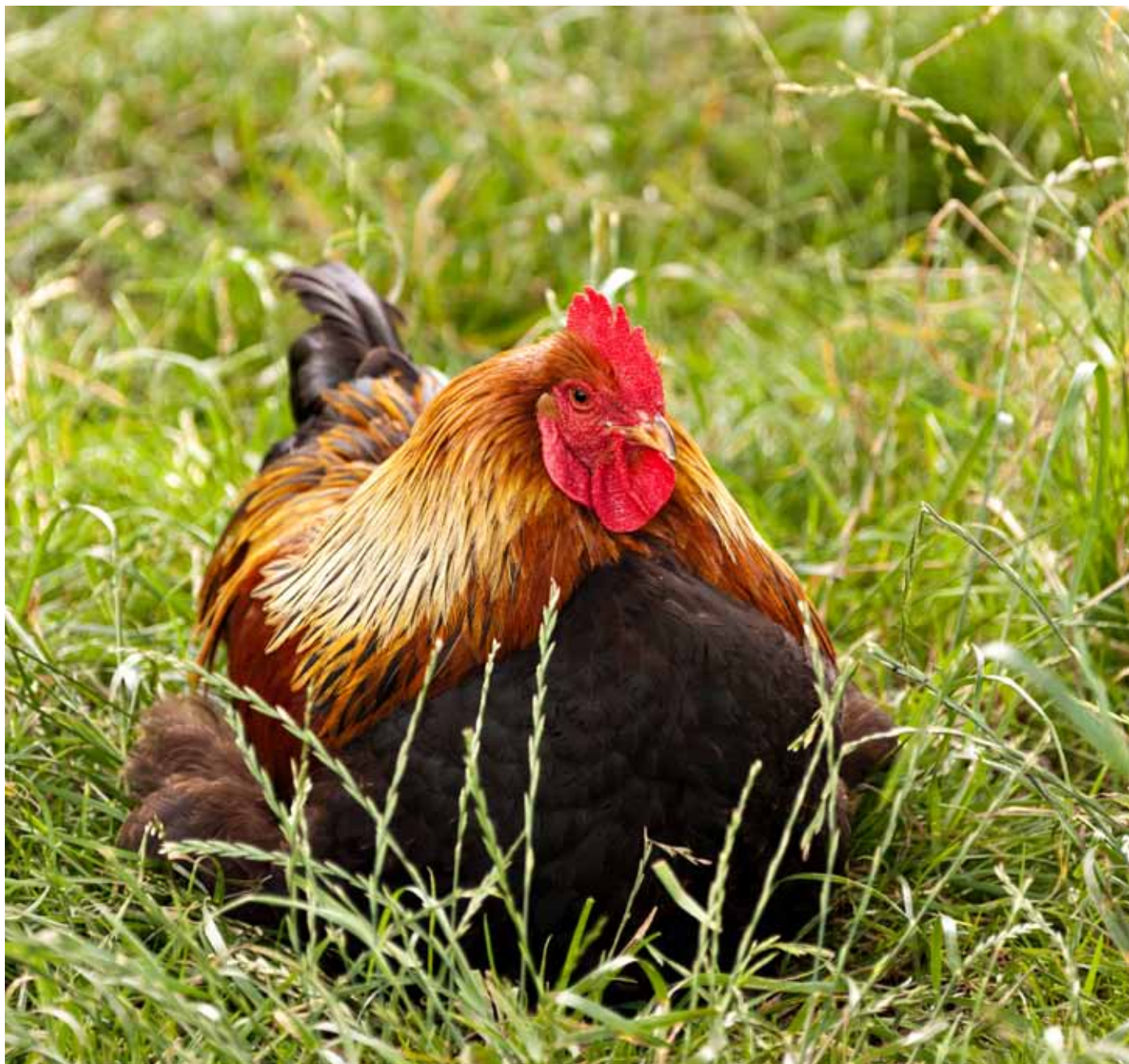
Sexlinks, Rhode Island Reds, Australorps, Orpingtons, Sussex, and the nearly undisputed Queen of the layers, the Leghorns. These girls will usually produce an egg a day, and occasionally two if you're lucky.

BEST DINNER DATE

Looking for good meat birds? Not surprisingly, the larger birds are typically the ones that will have most and tastiest meat, so keep your eye out for Barred Plymouth Rocks, Rhode Island Reds, Jersey Giants, Brahmas, Cochins and Cornish Rocks.

MOST POPULAR

If you want your chickens to be pets, or if you have children that you'll be raising your hens with, it's important to choose a breed known



for its good disposition. These birds are calm, docile, sweet natured, and don't usually mind being picked up and loved on. Chicken people in the know swear by their Orpingtons, Silkie Bantams, Brahma Bantams, Cochins and Plymouth Rocks.

COOL CHICKS AND HOT BABES

What if you live in either a cold or a hot climate? Not all chickens fare well in harsher climates, so it's best to choose a breed that is acclimated


to the weather in your area. For cooler climates with ice, snow and chilly temps, look for Buckeyes, Chanteclers, Wyandottes, Dominiques and Faverolles. Those living in warmer climates with summer temperatures topping 100 degrees should look for Jungle Fowl, Blue Andalusians, Golden Campines and Cubalayas.

MOST LIKELY TO WOW

So, we know that sometimes our decisions are prompted by sheer superficiality, right? No worries, this

is a judgment-free zone. If you're looking for those chicken breeds that boast incredible feathers, beautiful crests or charming ear tufts, you won't be able to resist Polish, Sultans, Phoenixes, Silkies, Americaunas and Sebrights. And for those of you desiring pretty egg colors, look for Americaunas or Easter Eggers (blue, green, pinkish brown), Marans (chocolate brown) and Welsummers (speckled).

Jenny Peterson runs a garden design firm in Austin. She's been keeping chickens for years. Find out more about her here.




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Homestead Dairy

Photos and story by Shaye Elliot

I've got to admit, getting into the swing of using up this milk from our new dairy cow has been a pretty easy task. Apparently, for all these years, I've just been gravely suppressing the desire to utilize more milk. Since we've been paying \$10 a gallon for a few years, it's easy to treat it as liquid gold and only use it for a few tasks here and there (despite fresh drinking, of course). But now that I've been blessed with 2+ gallons a day to use, I've fully realized and accepted my true love and desire to use this wonderful raw milk.

Shaye + raw milk = true love forever-ah.

When we first purchase Sally Belle, she was giving her owners about 2 gallons per milking (or 4 gallons per day). However, she was also getting about 5 pounds of grain per milking (which helps to boost milk production). I didn't want to carry the weight of purchasing that much grain, but it is difficult to teach an old cow new tricks and so (much to Sal's delight) she's still getting a few pounds of rolled oats and barley each milking. Cutting back on her grain consumption, paired with the fact that she's on a grass/alfalfa hay (and not pasture... it is almost winter, after all!) and her milk production is steady at 2 1/2 gallons per day, which is just fine with me.

2 1/2 gallons per day feels manageable. 4 gallons would have felt a bit more overwhelming. At least for this

milker.

So let's see here...

Oh yes. The milk! Let's talk about the milk. Isn't that why you're here, after all? To learn all about milking cows so that you can search Craigslist, find the cow of your dreams, purchase her, stick her in your front lawn, learn to milk her, and live happily ever after? Perfect. That's why I'm here too.

Ways to Utilize and Use Up Fresh Milk

DRINK IT

Duh, right? If you've been a follower of the blog for any time, you know that we're avid supporters and lovers of raw milk. We thrive on it. And let me just tell you, after drinking milk that has literally just been milked from the cow, it's a love that has reached a whole new level of awesomeness. I have never drank milk that fresh before – and dear me. Dear, dear, me. I am in love all over again. Once milk comes out of the cow, it begins to change — but when it's consumed fresh, the sugars haven't begun to break down yet. And it's so, so, sweet. And thanks to our sweet Jersey girl who gives about 30%+ of cream, it's incredibly rich and smooth. So ya. We've been drinking A LOT.



MAKE KEFIR

One of our favorite additions to breakfast is kefir smoothies. This fermented milk offers up a ton of probiotics and keeps gut flora awesomely active and healthy. A healthy gut = a healthy human. It's important to constantly be feeding our guts fermented foods that are rich in probiotics — which is why we always take care to include foods like kefir, kombucha, and sauerkraut into our diets. Breakfast is no exception and is a fantastic opportunity to utilize this lacto-fermented goodness.

MAKE YOGURT

For the same reasons as kefir. Yogurt is rich in probiotics and is a fantastic way to culture fresh milk. I

use a very easy method of culturing the yogurt in our crockpot which is easy and fool-proof. I usually culture a gallon of yogurt at a time which will last us a few weeks. Seasoned with vanilla and real maple syrup, we serve it over soaked granola or fresh fruit for breakfast and snacks. We also use it as a base for delicious chicken marinades or as an addition to smoothies or curries. Versatile. Delicious. And the kids love it. Win-win.

MAKE CHEESE

I've only learned to make a few easy cheeses thus far, like ricotta and yogurt cheese, but I've purchased all my cheese making supplies to make cheddar, feta, and mozzarella and am in the beginning stages of

learning how to make them all! My “cheese-cave” is in place for aging the cheese and I’m all set up with equipment. Since I’m already familiar with brewing and bread-making, I think that making cheese will be a fairly easy transition. It’s all about sanitizing and culturing – just in a slightly different way. I’m very much looking forward to it! Will it be perfect from the beginning? Of course not. I’m sure I’ll have plenty of flops (anyone else remember their first loaf of bread they made?). But it’s a skill I’m anxious and willing to learn. Being able to provide all of our cheese needs will be a huge bonus of having Sal around. And really, what’s one more task in the kitchen?

SHARE SOME WITH YOUR GRANDPA

Of, if your Grandpa is like mine, I’ll just show up and request some. Mine has been a huge supporter and advocate for us getting a dairy cow. He worked on dairies for many years (back in the day) and knew the joy that could come from having a cow around. The second day we had Sal, he showed up and drank three big glasses. Now, he’s got a standing appointment (three times a week) for making the drive up to our homestead and picking up a bit of fresh milk. I’m happy to share. If anyone has earned his share of farm fresh milk, it’s this ‘ol man.

BUTTER

What more need be said. Because of Sal’s high cream content (even without lush pasture!) we’ve been

able put up about 3/4 pound each day. I simply hand skim the cream off (leaving about an 1” on each gallon for flavor) and then mix it up. Wham. Bam. I’m excited to show you this process! Stay tuned.

BARTER

Having milk is like having farm money. We’ve already found a farmer that is willing to barter milk for piglets, come spring. We don’t sell our milk but we do trade it for things we need here on the farm. We recently agreed with a friend to trade milk for use of his bobcat and auger to dig holes for our new section of pasture. Both of us get something we want and no money is traded. I love that! Bartering is a great system.

FEED IT TO THE OTHER ANIMALS

We’re only fifteen days away from the butchering of our 45 meat chickens and they’ve been benefiting from having Sal around also! Right now, they’re receiving all the buttermilk that is a result of butter making. They also received a few gallons the first couple times I milked her, as my slow milking caused our poor cow to lose patience and stick her foot in the bucket. I don’t blame her... it took me an hour and a half the first time I milked her! What? Don’t judge. I’m a novice, remember? That being said, no milk goes to waste. So if it’s not something that we’re going to use directly, we can easily feed it to the laying hens, meat chickens, or dog. All of them are over the moon for it! Once we have the pigs in the spring, they’ll likely be first in line for any



clabbered milk.

I've heard it said that the dairy cow is the Queen of the farm, and in our instance, she totally is. Not only does she provide us with milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, and kefir but she also fertilizes our gardens and pastures, as well as supplements the chickens and dog. Sally Belle offers a lot to this farm and we're slowly learning that taking really good care of your dairy cow means taking really good care of your farm. Sal is the Queen around here and we're happy to have her.

I have a few favorite parts thus far about owning my own dairy cow. The first is that calm, dark, chilly time that we have together in the morning when I'm tucked up under her hind end, milking. I love the sound of her munching on her grains and the sound of her low mooing when

she's finished. I love the smell of her

and the warmth that she gives off. I love that she's not only teaching me patience and animal husbandry, but she's also helping me to learn so many tasks that were once common knowledge for the homesteader. Like how to make cheese. Or butter. What used to be common knowledge is now "artisan" and rare.

I enjoy reviving these chores from the past. Learning from them. Through them.

It offers a richness to everyday life that is almost too good to swallow.

Shaye Elliot is a writer and blogger. She is a published cookbook author. You can read more of her work and order her book — From Scratch: Easy recipes for traditionally prepared whole-food dishes — [here](#).



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Buttermilk: Reviving a Lost Superfood

By Shaye Elliot



I'm totally sold on the idea that Grandmas knew what they were doing.

Sure, they may have not had the science behind it that we have now, but everyone knows: Grandma knows best.

Our Grandparent's generation was a generation of usefulness, wisdom, resourcefulness, and appreciation. And if my dreamy idea of Grandparents is correct, I know that buttermilk was included in that.

While I was whipping up butter the other day, as I do every other day here on the farm thanks to our 'ol sweet Sal, I really got to thinking about the "waste product" of butter making. And it wasn't until we purchased our own dairy cow and started churning out own butter that it really even came to mind at all.

Isn't that how it goes when food is simply purchased from the supermarket? Out of sight, out of mind. But here I was, with that beautiful, fresh, raw, cultured pound of butter in one hand. And a quart jar of fresh cultured buttermilk in the other.

I knew what I was going to do with the butter – slather it on my vegetables, mix it up into butter buttons for the kids, use it in a homemade pie crust, smear it on dry skin patches (I'm going to need you to quit judging me now) or as the starter for sautéing vegetables in any number of dishes. Butter ain't my problem — I love it. It's practically a health food around here. And thankfully, since

we adhere to the Weston A. Price Foundation method of traditional eating, we get to eat butter (and a lot of it!) without fear or guilt.

But the buttermilk — well — that's a product that took some getting used to. Not because of it's taste (in fact, that's quite delicious) — but just because I wasn't used to working with it. What was this strange white-ish liquid? And what nutritional value did it offer?

WHAT IS BUTTERMILK?

Butter is made by churning cream which separates the cream into butter solids and buttermilk. So in the simplest terms, buttermilk is the slightly sour liquid byproduct of butter making. As most cream is left to sour for 8 hours prior to butter making, buttermilk is often considered a 'fermented' or 'cultured' dairy product.

IS IT GOOD FOR YOU?

Why yes, yes it is. In fact, I'd go so far as to say that buttermilk is the lost superfood. In reading one of my old, old cookbooks the other day I read that buttermilk was traditionally referred to as "Grandma's probiotic." It's swimming with microbes that feed one's gut with a variety of healthy bacteria. I know, I know. In our sterile culture, we tend to think of 'bacteria' as a bad word ("Eek! Bacteria! Won't that make me sick?") but truth be told, our bodies are like a billion percent bacteria (yes, that's a medically accurate statistic) and our bodies NEED bacteria (and lots



of it!) to flourish. Enter buttermilk. Which provides our bodies with said bacteria.

Buttermilk is also high in vitamins, potassium, and calcium and is lower in fat than milk (as most of the fat has been removed in the butter making process).

"Like the process of sprouting grains, fermentation of milk results in numerous beneficial changes. Fermentation breaks down casein, or milk protein, one of the most difficult proteins to digest. Culturing restores many of the enzymes destroyed during pasteurization including lactase, which helps digest lactose or milk sugar, and numerous enzymes, which help the body absorb calcium and other minerals. Lactase produced during the culturing process allows many people who are sensitive to fresh milk to tolerate fermented milk products. Both vitamin B and vitamin C content of milk increase during fermentation.

Research has shown that regular consumption of cultured dairy products lowers cholesterol and protects against bone loss. In addition, cultured dairy products provide beneficial bacteria and lactic acid to the digestive tract. These friendly creatures and their by-products keep pathogens at bay, guard against infection illness and aid in the fullest possible digestion of all food we consume. Perhaps this is why so many traditional societies value fermented milk products for their health-promoting properties and insist on giving them to the sick, the aged, and nursing mothers. In the basic sense of high-technology sanitation systems, lacto-fermented dairy foods, as well as lacto-fermented bever-

ages and vegetables, provide essential protection against infectious disease."

— Nourishing Traditions
But wait!

Don't just go to the store, pick up a bottle of the cheapest ultra-pasteurized fake buttermilk you can find, and start chugging. Gross. As with all dairy, pasteurization extends shelf life but kills all the present beneficial bacteria. So I'd encourage you to find a source for high-quality, organic, grass-fed milk, or farm-fresh milk, separate the cream, churn the butter and produce the buttermilk yourself.

WAYS TO USE IT UP

Now that I have a constant supply of buttermilk (I'm talkin' like a gallon a week) I've had to explore and discover all sorts of ways for using it up. It's been fun because I've found that many traditional recipes call for buttermilk – it used to be so common for households to have! When my husband called his Grandmother over Christmas and told her about our cow, she lit up with excitement and began talking about their family cows growing up and the way they utilized all of the dairy products. I'm thankful that knowledge doesn't have to pass with their generation. There are still those of us here who are fighting to learn, master and pass on the skills to our children as well.

USE IN BAKING

This is probably the most common way that we know of to utilize but-



termilk. Buttermilk pancakes. Buttermilk waffles. Buttermilk biscuits. Buttermilk bread. Buttermilk everything! I've been adapting and experimenting with new recipes these past few months to utilize it in almost all our baked goods. Buttermilk yields a better flavor, better rise, and better texture in baked goods – pure and simple. It can also be used to marinate meat in before gently frying it in home rendered tallow. Just sayin'.

USE TO SOAK GRAINS

In the past few months, I've discovered that buttermilk is my favorite acid medium for soaking grains in.

It results in a superior product consistently. It can be used in soaking recipes like whole-wheat biscuits, soaked waffles, or soaked bread.

DRINK IT

Yep. Lots of people drink it straight up. I prefer whole milk myself, so instead of drinking it plain, I mix it into our morning smoothies. It's an easy and efficient way to get the benefits of it in our daily routine.

MAKE DRESSING

If you have kids, I bet their favorite salad dressing is Ranch. Buttermilk is an essential ingredient in home-



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made ranch dressing. But it doesn't have to stop there! Here's a good recipe to try.

GIVE IT TO YOUR ANIMALS

Animals need probiotics, too! Our dogs and chickens always get a steady supply of cultured dairy – buttermilk included!

USE IT AS A BEAUTY PRODUCT

Yes, some folks swear by washing their face with buttermilk. Or dumping it over their hair as a conditioning treatment. I can't attest to it's

effectiveness in this area, but I may be able to soon...

Or, if you're still at a total loss at how to get more probiotic-rich buttermilk into your life, it may be time to purchase this book and get down to business.

Don't worry, Grandma. We'll be re-viving buttermilk before you know it! Cheers! (If you can't see, I'm lifting up a shot glass of buttermilk for you.)

Shaye Elliot is a writer and blogger. She is a published cookbook author. You can read more of her work and order her book – From Scratch: Easy recipes for traditionally prepared whole-food dishes – here.



Understanding Herbal Preparations

By Marlene Adelman



The natural world provides a wealth of resources in the form of living plants that help us to maintain our good health and to regain our balance when we become ill. The word heal comes from the Gothic hailjan and the Greek word holos, to make whole, so in essence, healing is to bring wholeness back to the body. Whole health is sought in mind, body, and spirit when preparing and using herbal preparations. Herbalists will aim to treat the whole person and not just the ailment or disease in order to create the desired state of whole health. Of course herbal treatment should always be used in conjunction with solid dietary choices, exercise and stress reduction techniques.

Herbalism, also known as botanical medicine, is an approach to healing that uses plant-based preparations. These preparations can be taken internally or used externally where the preparations are received into the body through the skin (transdermal). Herbal preparations are used to encourage and support optimal body function allowing the body to heal itself. Some herbs have an immediate effect such as calming herbs like kava kava or chamomile but many herbs work slowly and their effects will be noticed further into the healing process.

Healing herbs contain many pharmacologically active substances. One of these will usually have a dominant effect and it is this that will lead to the choice of this herb in the healing armamentarium. However, the other



less dominant active substance influences and modulates the action of the more dominant agent and it is this interplay between these active substances that creates the composite action of the whole herb. In herbal formulations an experienced herbalist will combine herbs using a stimulating herb that helps to transport the benefits of the other herbs very much like this natural process. "We may also liken this to seasoning a culinary dish with a balanced blend of spices. The blending will have a balance and complexity with nuances that may not be accomplished using a single spice. Balance is an important factor in our approach to using herbs as medicine."

As with all pharmacologically active agents caution is required. This means that the correct identification of any plant being used in an herbal preparation is essential. An excellent principle is "low and slow" which means to take low doses and gradually increase the dose and frequency until the desired effect has been achieved. Herbal remedies used appropriately rarely cause side effects. However, one should not take or use herbal preparations if taking any prescription medications, during pregnancy, or while nursing without the approval of your health care provider or unless under the supervision of a knowledgeable herbalist.

Medicinal plants contain vitamins and minerals along with constituents such as tannins, mucilage, volatile oils, bitters and alkaloids. These

properties must be extracted using the proper method to preserve the potency and to protect the volatile oils. Following are some commonly used herbal preparations.

INFUSIONS

More commonly referred to as tea or tisane, infusion is the best method for the gentler parts of the plant like the leaves and flowers. To extract the medicinal properties, these plant parts are steeped in hot water for about 15 minutes. Fresh or dried herbs can be used but the measurement for fresh herbs will be 3 parts to one part dried.

DECOCTIONS

This method is similar to infusion but is used for the heartier, denser parts of the plant such as the roots, seeds, bark or nuts. Unlike the softer parts of the plant these parts require more heat to release their natural oils.

TINCTURES

A concentrated herbal extract made by using a menstruum of at least 60 proof alcohol, less commonly; vinegar or vegetable glycerin. Tinctures are much stronger than infusions or decoctions and should be used in lower doses less frequently. Alcohol is the favored menstruum for most herbalists as it a powerful solvent that is able to extract most of the beneficial properties of the herb while also acting as a preservative.

HERBAL WINE

Steeping herbs in wine for at least a week or two may yield a digestive aid as well as a pleasant beverage that can be drunk to sooth and calm frayed nerves.

SYRUPS

"Just a spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down" and so it is with herbal syrups.

These syrups are made by creating a concentrated water infusion and then adding a sweetener like honey or maple syrup.

Alcohol can be added as a preservative. Syrups are very useful for treating sore throats and coughs.

INFUSED OILS

Make a wonderful base for many body care products. Oil and gentle heat are used to extract the beneficial properties of the plant material. Infused oils can be used alone or in salves or lotions.

SALVES

Can be applied to chapped and chaffed or wounded skin. Salves are made using infused oil, beeswax, and sometimes essential oils.

INHALATIONS

Boiling water is poured over dried or fresh herbs to create steam. Leaning over the bowl with a towel draped over one's head to breath in

the vapors can relieve discomforts in conditions such as colds, flu, or sinusitis.

COMPRESSES

Using a woven cloth soaked in an infusion, decoction or tincture diluted in water can be applied directly to the skin to relieve inflammation, soreness or muscle tension.

POULTICE

Chopped or finely ground fresh herbs are applied to wounded or inflamed skin, infections and insect bites to either sooth or draw out toxins.

These are some of the most common herbal preparations but there are many other methods of using herbs.

Herbs are also food, and that fact is sometimes overlooked.

Eating fresh herbs that you have wild crafted or grown in your own garden can be nourishing both to your body and to your soul as it brings us closer to the origin of all life, earth, water and sun.

Marlene Adelman is the Founder and Director of the Herbal Academy of New England, the home of the Online Intermediate Herbal Course and meeting place for Boston area herbalists.

Through the school and online herbal classes, Marlene has brought the wild and wonderful world of plant medicine to over 1000 students across the globe.

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Are You Killing Your Trees With Mulch?

By: Susan Vinskofski

Improperly
Mulched Tree

The next time that you take a walk in the forest, pay close attention to the protective covering on the ground. Leaves and needles have fallen and as they decompose, they nourish the soil. Mulch can provide the same nourishing protection for the trees on your property whether those trees are coniferous, deciduous, or fruit-bearing.

BENEFICIAL MULCH

Mulch has many benefits — it discourages weeds, adds nutrients, helps to maintain a uniform soil temperature, and conserves moisture. It also protects the soil by preventing compaction and reducing soil erosion. And mulching around trees can prevent competition from nutrient and moisture robbing grasses. It also keeps that grass away from the base of trees, reducing the risk of damage from lawn mowers and weed-whackers. All in all, mulching is a win-win situation.

WHICH MULCH TO USE

The mulch material most often used for trees is bark. An even better choice is ramial wood chips — those which contain entire small branches, leaves and needles. Ramial wood chips are especially beneficial since they provide nutrients as they break down. Shredded leaves also make a good mulch under deciduous trees, and needles under coniferous trees. Avoid using black plastic since it can interfere with oxygen and water supply to the tree's roots.

THE PROPER WAY TO MULCH

So, there is no dispute that mulch can be extremely beneficial for trees. But, improper mulching can stress a tree rather than benefit it. It can cause disease, insect infestation, and even death. Sadly, some of the worst offenders of poor mulching practices that I've seen are "professional" landscapers. And when others see how the landscaper mulched, they often copy their technique. Most landscapers are not arborists or tree professionals and have not received proper training. We have worked closely with an arborist on our property and have discussed proper mulching at length.

Before mulching, first remove all weeds and grass out to the drip-line of the tree. The drip line extends to the outer circumference of the tree branches. This is where the tiny rootlets are located that take up water for the tree, an important area to water. I once took a short-cut by laying newspaper down to smother the grass, rather than remove it, and then mulched on top of it. Our arborist warned me that I was creating a situation where too much heat would be generated for the roots of the tree. So, all of the mulch and paper were removed and I had to start from scratch. It's not always practical to mulch all the way out to the drip-line, but that is the ideal, so go as far as possible.

Next, apply 2" - 3" of wood chips over the area. More is not necessarily better and could suffocate the



Root flare

roots. The vast majority of a tree's roots are in the top 12" of soil and deep mulching can actually cause the roots to grow up into the mulch in search of oxygen.

It's also important that the wood chips be kept completely away from the trunk of the tree. At the base of a tree is a root flare: The area that flares out to support the tree. Mulch should never cover the root flare. One of the most detrimental techniques used in mulching is to pile it right up against the tree.

Mulch is for the benefit of the roots and should be spread wide, not deep, and should never touch the bark. Mulching in this manner can damage trees in several ways. It suffo-

cates the inner bark, where food is transferred up and down the trunk, by keeping moisture in direct contact with the tree. Deep mulch can also become habitat for rodents and insects, and can cause disease to flourish.

The damage to trees from improper mulching is not always immediately evident, just as our bodies can sometimes get away with poor nutrition for a while. But the damage will eventually be seen and may not be able to be remedied at that point. Trees are functional and beautiful and taking proper care of them will help to insure that they will provide many benefits for years to come.

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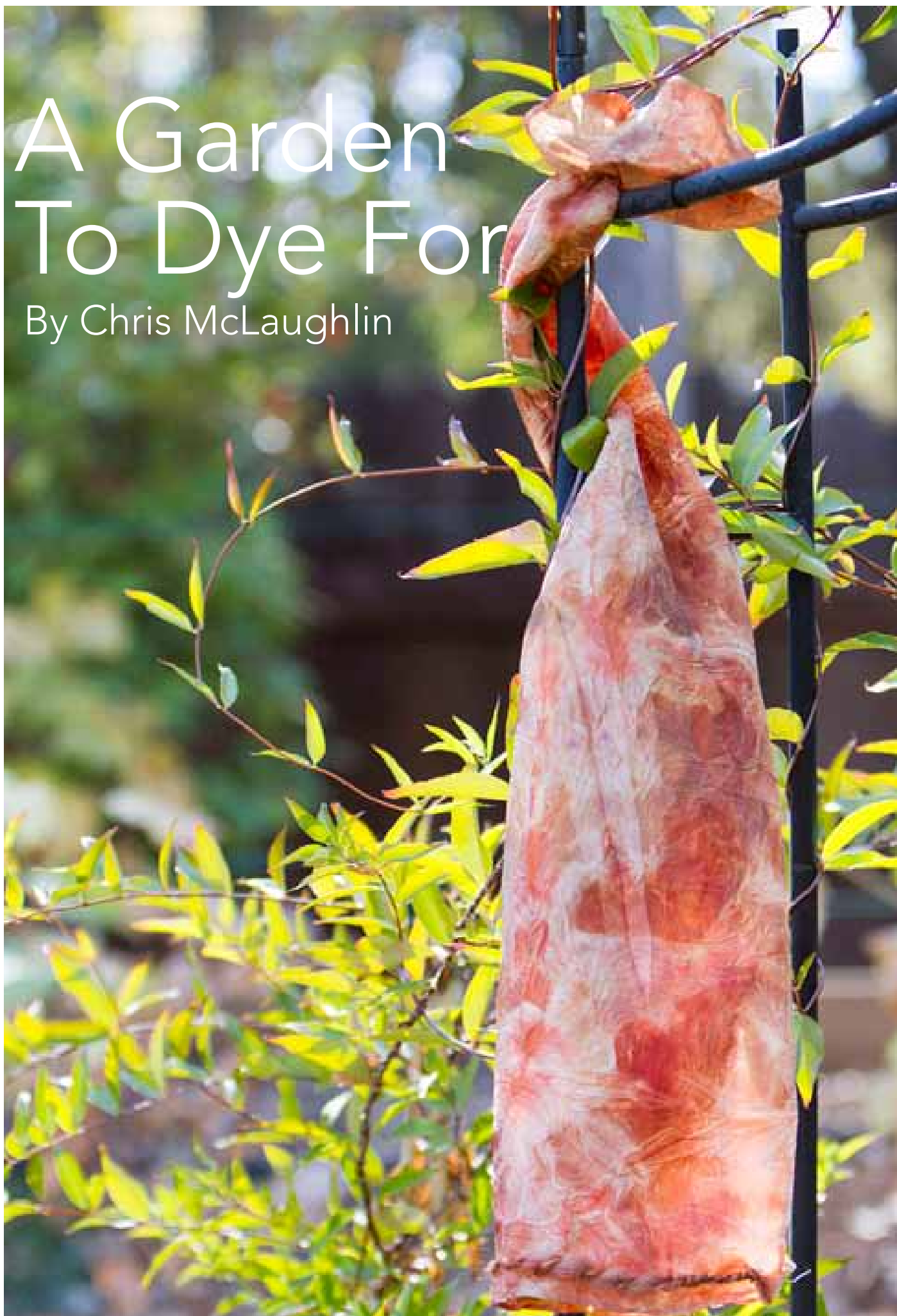
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A Garden To Dye For

By Chris McLaughlin



Home-grown botanical dyes are in, and they're part of today's shift toward natural and organic living. "A new generation discovers grow-it-yourself dyes," says the New York Times. No chemistry degree required -- just a garden and kitchen (or outdoor dye station). Many of these plants may already be in our cutting, cottage or food gardens, ready to pull double duty as dye plants for fiber and fabrics.

My new book, *A Garden to Dye For* (St.Lynn's Press, 2014) will be released on April 15th wherever books are sold. Don't let the beautiful fibers on the front cover fool you; natural plant dyes are exciting on more than just wool. There something for handspinners, knitters, and families, too. Below are a couple of excerpts from the book.

5 NATURAL DYE FACTS

1. "NATURAL DYES AREN'T COLORFAST." TRUE OR FALSE?

That would be false. Yes, some plant dyes are fugitive — but not all of them. Due to substances such as natural tannins, many natural dyes

are substantive, which means they stay put — no mordant necessary to fix the color to the fiber. Walnut, for example, offers you staying power, as does madder, Osage orange, onion skins, goldenrod, etc. Mordanting your fabric or fiber will go a long way toward getting color to stay put. Plus, how much fading has to do with which plant you use, as well as all of the other variables we talked about earlier.

When someone mentions fading, I can see how that may come off as a huge negative on the surface. But in my experience, many of them fade ever-so-slowly and gently. I don't think it's an exaggeration to compare it to the changing seasons in the garden. If you end up using something seriously fugitive, there's a window of opportunity for over-dyeing here. Don't forget that some fibers take color better than others. Wool, for instance, has always taken natural dyes easier than cotton has, at least for me.

To be fair, natural dyes might be a reasonable concern commercially. It could be potentially challenging to achieve vast amounts of the exact same dye lot, for instance. On the other hand, I've spoken with small yarn companies that have no problem selling their naturally dyed yarns with complete customer satisfaction. I'll have to leave that up to the individual who's looking to take this to profitable heights. For the intentions of this book, it's a non-issue.



2. "NATURAL DYES ARE ALWAYS ECOLOGICALLY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SAFE." TRUE OR FALSE?

False.

Does that surprise you? The reason the answer is false is because of the word "always." As I mentioned earlier, most plant dyes are considered non-toxic (as well as biodegradable and renewable). However, not all of them. Some are toxic if ingested and some can cause allergic skin reaction on contact. Also, not all mordants are completely safe and non-toxic and some dye plants can also be poisonous to people and pets. All

dyes and mordants should be handled with thought and safety in mind.

3. "COLOR DERIVED FROM PLANTS IS ALWAYS DULL." TRUE OR FALSE?

Nah. (False)

Have you seen indigo? Pokeberry? Lichen? Madder? Marigold? People, please.

4. "MAKING NATURAL DYES IS VERY TIME-CONSUMING." TRUE OR FALSE?

I'm going to say both. Depending on which plant you're using and what color you're trying to achieve,

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“THERE’S
NOTHING LIKE
WORKING WITH
LIVING COLOR
— ESPECIALLY
WHEN IT CAME
FROM THE
GARDEN THAT
YOU TEND.

natural dyes may take more time than their synthetic counterparts, for sure. This is because sometimes we leave our fibers in a dyebath overnight or we’re using an indigo vat; and getting the vat prepared takes a little time. That said, the basic dyebath that I use for the most part isn’t very time-consuming at all. So it can be whatever you want it to be, depending on your goals.

Let me leave this subject with this thought: Ever heard of the Slow Food Movement? If not, then look it up, because making food, fiber, and life from scratch is the way the wind is blowing these days. Slower is being more aware and more involved. Slower usually equals better. In fact, no matter what kind of dyes you use, if you’re doing it by hand, it’s slow and that means it’s good. Growing the plants and extracting your own dyes brings intimacy to the craft.

5. “NATURAL DYES AREN’T WORTH THE HASSLE.” TRUE OR FALSE.

Au contraire. It may come as no surprise that natural dyes create hues that are in perfect agreement with one another (probably a no-brainer). There’s nothing like working with living color — especially when it came from the garden that you tend.

They are so worth it. They’re worth it for fiber artists, knitters, weavers, and quilters. They’re worth it for sewers and moms and kids. But for the gardener? It’s especially worth it for the gardener. We loved the plants first.

How to Use Plants from the Garden to Create Natural Colors for Fabrics and Fibers

A Garden to Dye For

Chris McLaughlin

Click Here to Order Your Copy!

You don't have to have a degree in chemistry to create your own natural dyes. It just takes a garden plot and a kitchen.

A Garden to Dye For shows how super-simple it is to plant and grow a dyer's garden and create beautiful dyes.

Many of these plants may already be in our cutting, cottage or food gardens, ready for double duty.

This is the book that bridges the topic of plant dyes to mainstream gardeners, the folks who enjoy growing the plants as much as using them in craft projects.



DYE YOUR OWN EASTER EGGS

Plants that produce fugitive (fade quickly) colors are perfect for dyeing Easter eggs.

Before we begin, I encourage you to branch out beyond the everyday white egg. When brown, blue, and green eggs are dyed the most beautiful colors show up!

Caution: Remember not to use any plant materials that are considered poisonous. Only safe, edible foods should be used for eggs, as the assumption is that the eggs will be eaten.

Like the other dye recipes, you can use a hot bath, which means that you color the eggs at the same time they're being hard-boiled. Or you



can dye them in a cold bath. The hot bath works faster, but the cold process may be easier if you are dyeing with more colors, because you can make a bunch of dyes up in advance. Because of the limited burners, you could only do 4 hot dyebaths at a time (if you've got more than 4 burners, great).

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Non-reactive dyepots
- Water
- Stove (if you're using the hot method)
- Glass jars or bowls (for cold method)
- Eggs
- White vinegar
- Dyestuff: onion skins, berries, turmeric, beets, red cabbage, etc.

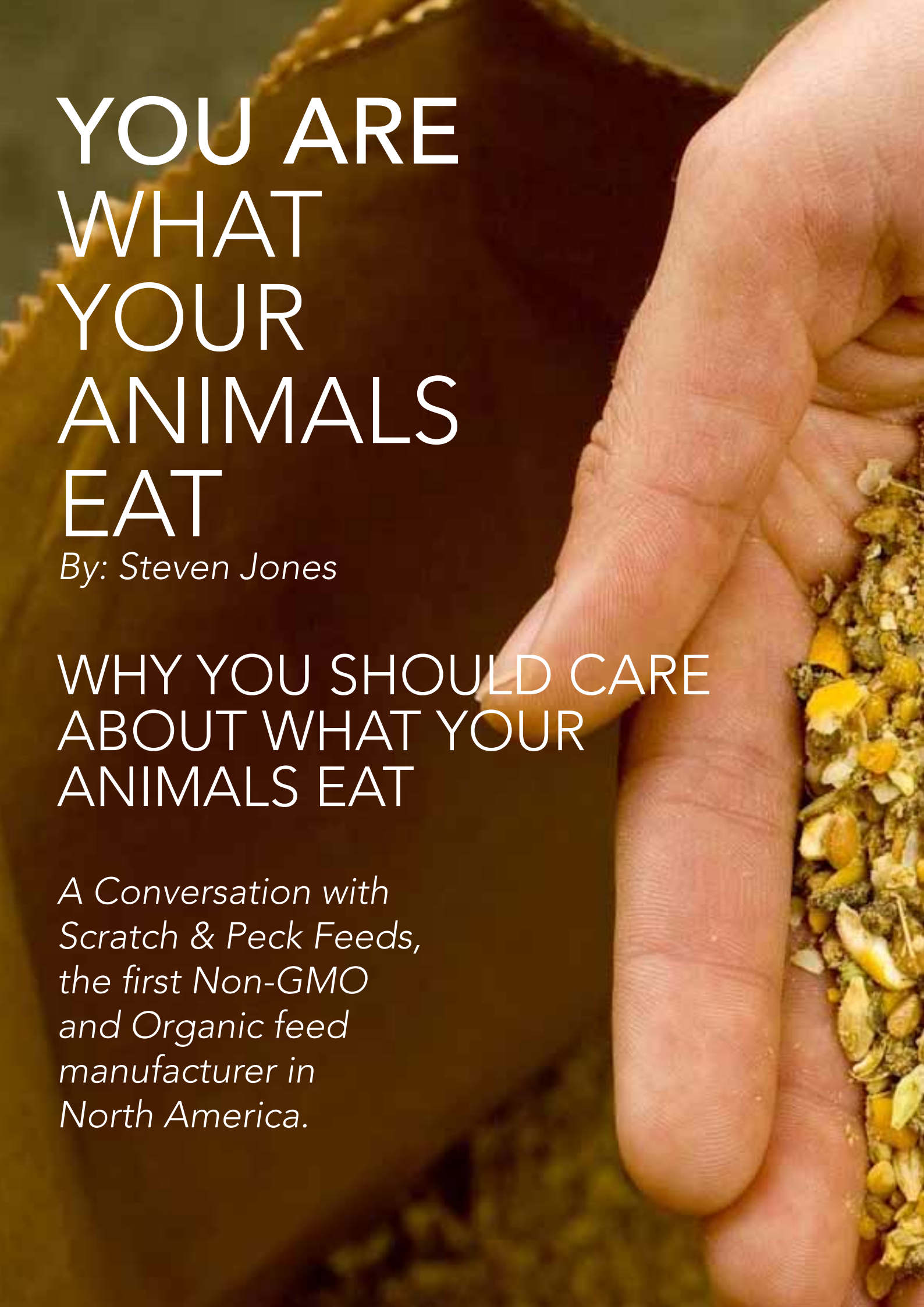
There are many variations on making natural Easter egg dye, but this is what works for me.

HOT DYE METHOD

I like to make my natural dyes (simmer in a pan of water for 15 minutes or so) and then strain out the plant dyestuff so just the liquid remains in the pot. I add my eggs to the pot and add water just so the eggs are covered by about 2" of water. Add 1/8 cup of vinegar, then bring the pot to a boil for 17 - 20 minutes. This method dyes and hard-boils the eggs all at the same time.

COLD DYE METHOD

Make the dyes by simmering in a pot of water for 20 - 25 minutes. Strain off the dyestuff, add 1/8 cup of water, and let the liquid cool in jars. Once the dye is cool, add an already hard-boiled egg to each dye color and leave them there for at least an hour -- but for the most impressive colors, leave them in there up to 10 hours. Caution: If you decide to let your hard-boiled eggs sit in a dye for longer than 2 hours, they need to be refrigerated for health safety. Don't leave them sitting in the dye container on the counter for hours.



YOU ARE WHAT YOUR ANIMALS EAT

By: Steven Jones

WHY YOU SHOULD CARE ABOUT WHAT YOUR ANIMALS EAT

*A Conversation with
Scratch & Peck Feeds,
the first Non-GMO
and Organic feed
manufacturer in
North America.*



**Sustainable
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If you care about where your food comes from, you should care about what your livestock eats. We depend on our livestock for meat, eggs and milk, so we work hard on finding food for our animals that is non-GMO, organic and sustainable.

And that's why it's great to find companies like Scratch & Peck feed.

We recently had the chance to hear from Diana Ambauen-Meade, the founder of Scratch & Peck where we got to find out why caring about what your animals eat is so important.

WHY ARE NON-GMO ANIMAL FEEDS SO IMPORTANT?

Studies have found harmful effects on the health of livestock animals fed GMOs which include toxic and allergenic effects as well as changes in nutritional value. Long term and multi-generational studies are needed but unfortunately are not required by current government regulations. Because of the wide belief that GMOs are unsafe, more than 60 countries around the world have placed restrictions or outright bans on the production or sale of GMOs. We believe the onus of proof of safety should fall on the biotech, genetic engineering companies rather than on the public or organic farmers to prove the opposite or to bear the burden of protecting their crops from genetically modified ones.

Until proof of safety is confirmed we

believe it is wiser and healthier to feed certified organic, verified non-GMO "real" food to our animals. "You are what your animals eat"

CAN YOU DEFINE GMO AND NON-GMO, ESPECIALLY IN RELATION TO ANIMAL FEEDS?

In the case of animal feed GMO would mean the use of grains that have been genetically engineered with DNA from bacteria, viruses or other plants and animals. These experimental combinations of genes from different species cannot occur in nature or in traditional crossbreeding. This means that GMO corn has been engineered to withstand the direct application of an herbicide such as Roundup and/or to produce an insecticide. GMO corn is actually patented as an insecticide, NOT a food seed.

Non-GMO animal feed then means that all of the ingredients are natural and have not been engineered to be anything but what nature provides. For us, being non-GMO is not quite enough, however, which is why we pursued our organic certification as well. Even if ingredients are non-GMO but not organic, they are grown conventionally meaning there is a high use of chemicals as fertilizer, herbicides or pesticides. Very often the soil has been so depleted that it is essentially dead which then requires more chemical fertilizer and around, around it goes.





We support organic farming because its practices are life enhancing; soil fertility enrichment, ecological harmony restoration, natural pest management and biological agriculture diversity.

DO YOU USE HYBRID GRAINS IN YOUR FEED? OR HEIRLOOM VARIETIES ONLY? WHY?

We use hybrid grains rather than heirloom varieties which in our opinion would be ideal. Unfortunately heirloom grains are not a feasible option for us due to the minimal amounts being grown in the US and consequently the extremely high cost. Our best current options included using only organic and non-GMO grains.

WHERE DO YOU BUY THE MATERIALS FOR YOUR FEED?

As often as possible we source our grains direct from organic farmers here in the Pacific Northwest. Because we are challenged with lack of availability due to an increasing loss of organic farm land and pressure from human food demands we sometimes look to our nearby Canadian organic growers to satisfy our needs.

HOW LONG HAS SCRATCH AND PECK

OFFERED NON-GMO FEED? HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN BUSINESS?

Since 2009, when I founded Scratch and Peck Feeds, we have striven to be non-GMO by not using soy and by sourcing only organic grains including corn. We earned our Non-GMO Verified status from the Non-GMO Project in July 2012 which made us the first feed company in North America to do so.

WHY SHOULD ANYONE PAY THAT MUCH ATTENTION TO WHAT THEY FEED THEIR ANIMALS?

The fact of the matter is that the quality of chicken eggs, goat, cow or sheep milk and/or meat is directly affected by the food they consume. The old adage that "you are what you eat" holds true for animals as well. One of the main reasons folks raise their own animals is to know where their food is coming from. That tells me they care a lot about the quality and nutritional value of the food they put into their own and their family's mouths. High quality inputs equal high quality outputs.

WHY DON'T YOU USE SOY PRODUCTS IN YOUR FEEDS?

Health wise, there has been a distinct rise in sensitivities and allergies to soy. Phytic acids in soy have been shown to block the uptake of zinc, magnesium, calcium and iron. Additionally, estrogen mimicking compounds found in soy can have negative impacts on thyroid function.

And because what we feed our animals flows through their system, for instance, if a chicken is fed soy it will be present in her egg. We have some customers who thought they were allergic to eggs but found that when the chicken eats a soy-free feed they are able to eat the eggs with no ill effects. In these cases, the person was actually allergic to the soy and not the egg.

DO YOU ONLY USE WHOLE GRAINS TO PRODUCE YOUR FEEDS? IS ANY OF IT PROCESSED IN ANY WAY?

Yes, we use whole grains! The only "process" ever applied to our grains is to crack them into appropriate sized morsels for various animals to eat and digest properly. Chick Starter feed is finely ground for the little ones; Pig and Goat feeds are also cracked. All of our other Chicken Feeds contain whole grains with the peas and corn cracked. We use zero water, heat or high pressure extrusion to create pellets. We

believe this ensures that the grains retain the nutritional values nature intended.

IF I SPROUT MY GRAINS, WOULD IT MAKE IT MORE AFFORDABLE, VIA DECREASED COST PER POUND?

Sprouting grains is a great way to add both diversity and cost savings to your feeding program. Poultry crave fresh green grass, just like we dig into a garden salad. Especially in the winter months when there is little to forage on outside, sprouting a tray of barley, wheat, or oats is a great way to supplement your hen's layer feed. While poultry does not digest green forage with the same efficiency that a ruminant does, it certainly influences the health of the animal positively and will make the egg produced have a darker orange yolk. I have seen it said that you get up to a 7 fold increase of feed by sprouting – whether that is precisely true or not, your birds will thank you for the extra effort and time that it takes to incorporate a fodder system into your feeding program.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SPROUTING?

The changes that happen in a seed



when it sprouts are amazing. Complex compounds become simple compounds, vitamin levels rise, especially Vitamin C. The digestibility of the nutrients increases, allowing you to get more feed value for your dollar. Now spouting grains doesn't result in a complete feed – you still need a well balanced layer ration – but will certainly benefit your flock, especially in the off season months.

Depending on light conditions and temperature, it will take between a week to two weeks to grow your sprouts to a point that you can feed it. For chicks, it is best to feed when the leaves are 1-2 inches high. For adult poultry, 6 inches is the optimum height and level of maturity.

Make sure you are feeding grit or have it available free choice, as the birds will need it to help process the grass and grains.

HOW DO I FERMENT FEED? WHY?

The benefits of fermented feed, especially with Scratch and Peck, are three fold: making the feed more palatable to chickens, making the feed more nutritious and bio-available, and helping the chicken to eat all of the feed, including the fines which are the mineral and protein supplement in the Scratch and Peck complete feed.

Just as people use the process of lacto-fermentation to preserve food and foster beneficial probiotic bac-

teria, so backyard chicken keepers can take an already great feed and make it better. Because we do not cook and extrude our feed, our mix includes both whole grains and finer particles. The chickens will sometimes pick out the whole grains and leave the rest behind, which can result in an unbalanced diet. Fermenting the feed solves this problem by bonding the grains and the minerals. It also raises the protein levels and makes the feed easier to digest in the chickens intestine.

To start the process, you need to measure out the amount of feed you will use in one day. Normally, I have used the figure of 1/3 of a pound per adult layer, per day. With my trials in fermenting, I have dropped this down to 1/4 of a pound – by soaking the feed, it expands (satiates the appetite with less) and becomes more digestible. I weigh out 1/4 pound of feed times the amount of hens I have, and then put that in the first of four buckets. I add in between 3 – 4 parts water to one part feed. You want the water to completely cover the feed, so it becomes an anaerobic environment. You want to cover this bucket lightly with a cloth or lid, but not enough to make it airtight. Then – let it sit, at room temperature, for three days. If it is outside in a colder environment, you may want to let it go for 4-5 days. 3 Days works the best for me. The lactic acid bacteria – namely, lactobacillus, is present naturally. In that environment, it will start to reproduce – living off the carbohydrates in the grain – un-



til it gets to a point where you see bubbles on the top of the water and a slightly sour smell develops.

The next day, repeat the steps until you have a progression of buckets soaking feed. On day 3, use whatever liquid is remaining to pour into the 4th bucket as a starter culture, and begin the process again by adding enough water to the mixture to more than cover it. The feed should be fed in an open tub, so there is no chance of it getting stuck in a corner and developing mold. It should be wet but not soupy. Introduce this to your birds – it might take a little bit before they really become accustomed to it, but once adapted the birds seem to really prefer the fermented version. Rinse the bucket

out, measure out the grain for the next day, and keep the cycle going. People who have been using fermentation have reported better health of their flock and increased egg production. My experience is, with the money that you invest into feeding your flock, you're better off getting the most for your efforts – and fermenting feed is the way to do it!



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Easter BASKETS







Among the many things Jennifer Burcke excels at — writing, cooking, homesteading and more — it is arguable that one of her most beautiful creations is the baskets she makes at 1840 Farm.

These baskets, each a unique, handmade work of art, are perfect for gathering eggs from your coop, produce from your farm or just sitting on your kitchen table looking beautiful.

The baskets are based on a technique Jennifer learned from her Great Grandmother. Jennifer says her grandmother used worn out clothing to create the baskets, making useful, beautiful items out of discarded materials.









Each basket in the 1840 Farm Basket Collection comes with a hand signed product tag that includes the date that the basket was finished. Each basket is numbered and displayed in the photo gallery on 1840Farm.com.

The coiled fabric basket are made by hand at 1840 Farm. I tear each fabric strip by hand before wrapping them around 100% cotton cording.

The fabric wrapped cord is then coiled and stitched together using a zigzag stitch on my sewing machine. I continue to wrap the coil and shape the basket as it is stitched, ending in our trademark spiral design. Because the baskets are

hand shaped, each one is a true original. I use repurposed fabrics purchased at local charitable thrift stores. The purchase of these fabrics benefits local charities and gives back to the community.

Your purchase will help to support the charitable organizations that provide these recycled fabrics for sale. I blend new fabrics and materials with the recycled fabric to create a pleasing color palette for each basket. Each basket has its own unique color pattern and slight variation in shape.

— Jennifer Burcke

Click here to learn more about the baskets.



A Rancher's Hands

By: Bobbie Glick

I remember as a little girl looking at my daddy's hands and thinking how strong they were; when compared to my own, or even my mom's, they were huge. It was comforting to me. As I look back on those memories through the eyes of my little girl self, I am very often brought to the edge of tears. Those hands worked hard for us. They worked themselves into big knuckles and dry cracks that gathered the dirt and never fully let it go, no matter the scrubbing. Those hands are a rancher's hands. They have gone through things that men should never have to go through, and they have come out tougher, and yet gentler, on the other side.

I married a hard worker and have watched his hands go through a very similar transformation over the years. They were always work-roughened; after all, he was a ranch kid who knew all about hard work at a very young age, but each job has seen them changed in different ways. Horseshoeing toughened them to a very unique form of almost-leather. Roofing gave them joints that still ache and probably always will. They endure cold that makes me wince just thinking about it, much less work in it. They have grease spots that I don't think are ever going to go away, and cracked skin that will probably just choose to stay that way. His wedding ring is

a nice square shape and has come close to causing serious damage to his finger due to fencing and cattle. Ranching presents its own conditions that have further changed them and made them look more and more like my father's hands each year.

And yet through all of this tough exterior, these are the gentlest hands I know. They are the hands that are always there to let a dog know she did a good job, to reassure a horse that thinks a shadow may be the boogie monster, or to calm a cow that needs doctoring. They are the sure hands that know how to pull a calf when needed and then to gently encourage that calf in the direction of his mama. They are the hands that are very carefully nurturing those that are growing up to walk in his foot-

steps. Those hands know that little hands are watching them and that every move is analyzed and internalized. They know that what they do is important because someday those watching hands will take the place of theirs and they need to be prepared. They need to teach them the best that they can. And they know that the best way to teach, is to show.

Those hands care for the stock and land in a very punishing way at times, and yet it's a very rewarding experience, filled with meaning, that they wouldn't trade for any "normal" job. Those are the hands of my father. Those are the hands of my husband. And someday, those will be the hands of my children. It can be a hard life, but they know it to be worth it, and that is enough.

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A Springtime Treat

By: Jennifer Burcke





Easter is cause for a spring-time celebration.

After a long, New England winter, a holiday that celebrates renewal and rebirth is a very welcome sight.

When we gather at our farmhouse this Easter Sunday, I will have an extra reason to celebrate.

I'll know that there are Smoked Cheddar Gougères ready to serve and that I have the freedom to enjoy our time together as a family instead of spending hours in the kitchen preparing our Easter meal.

I plan to have these gougères ready to serve with a cheese course of local cheeses followed by a quiche made the day before and chilled overnight in the refrigerator.

The work of preparing our family meal will be behind me.

Then I'll be able to relax and enjoy our time together along with the delicious food served at our fam-

ily table. Whenever we gather as a family, these Smoked Cheddar Gougères are the most requested appetizer.

While my family favors them because of their delicious taste, I give them high marks for being easy to prepare ahead of time.

They are equally delicious when baked fresh or from the freezer.

As a chicken keeper, I love transforming the fresh eggs from our coop's heritage breed hens into this enriched pate a choux dough.

As spring finally arrives and brings with it more hours of daylight, our hens will begin to fill our egg baskets with fresh eggs every day.

Those beautiful eggs paired with the smoked cheddar cheese results in an intense, earthy flavor.

The end result is cheesy perfection. It is a wonderful way to celebrate the rebirth of our family life here on the farm.

Smoked Cheddar Gougères

Makes 60 one inch puffs

Gougères are made by enriching pate a choux dough with grated cheese. As they bake in the oven, the cheese melts and combines with the rich egg batter resulting in a cheese puff that is light and airy yet deliciously rich. They are a hit with children and adults alike and make an excellent addition to a cheese plate, or any plate for that matter.



When purchasing the cheese for this recipe, select a variety that demands your attention. This is not the time to use cheese with a delicate or subtle flavor. Instead, go for the boldest variety you can find. For me, the choice is a locally made variety from a family owned general store that has been in business since 1869. The cheese is an extremely sharp cheddar with a firm texture along with the same cheese in a smoked variety.

- 1 cup (8 ounces) Whole Milk
- 4 oz Butter
- 1/2 tsp Sea Salt
- 1 cup (120 grams) All-purpose Flour
- 4 large eggs
- 4 oz Sharp Cheddar, grated
- 2 oz Smoked Cheddar, grated

Position the racks in the top and bottom third of the oven. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit. Line two baking sheets with nonstick baking mats or parchment paper. Measure the flour into a small bowl. Crack all of the eggs into a bowl and set aside until they are needed. Grate the two cheeses and gently blend them together in a small bowl.

Combine the milk, butter, and salt in a medium sized pot over high heat. Monitor the mixture closely, stirring often, to avoid scorching. As soon as the mixture comes to a boil, reduce the heat to medium and add the flour in one addition. Stir rapidly with a wooden spoon until the mixture comes together to form a ball. Stir continuously for two minutes until the dough is completely smooth and leaves a film on the bottom of the pot. Remove the pot from the heat and allow the mixture to cool for five minutes.

Once the five minutes have elapsed, add the eggs one at a time, stirring vigorously after each addition.

With the addition of each egg, the dough will break. This is normal; rest assured that the dough will be perfectly smooth by the time the fourth egg is incorporated. Once the eggs have all been added, stir in the grated cheese until it is evenly distributed.

Using a spoon or a Tablespoon sized cookie scoop, drop the dough by rounded Tablespoons onto the prepared baking sheets leaving 1 inch of space between each gougère. Place the baking sheets in the oven and bake for 20 – 28 minutes, rotating the pans halfway through the baking time.

The gougères will be done when they become golden brown in color and have a puffed appearance with a dry exterior. Remove the gougères from the oven and place the baking sheets on wire racks to cool. Gougères can be served warm or at room temperature. They are delicious when paired with tangy cheeses. My favorite pairing is Bayley Hazen Blue from Jasper Hill Creamery in neighboring Vermont. Note: Rounded Tablespoons of dough can be frozen individually on a tray lined with freezer paper. Once they are completely frozen, store the gougères in a freezer bag until ready to use. To bake, simply place frozen gougères on a prepared baking sheet and bake in a 400 degree oven for 30 – 36 minutes.

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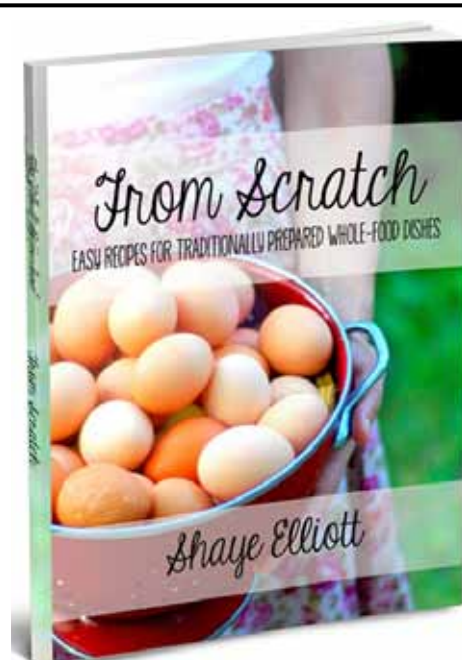
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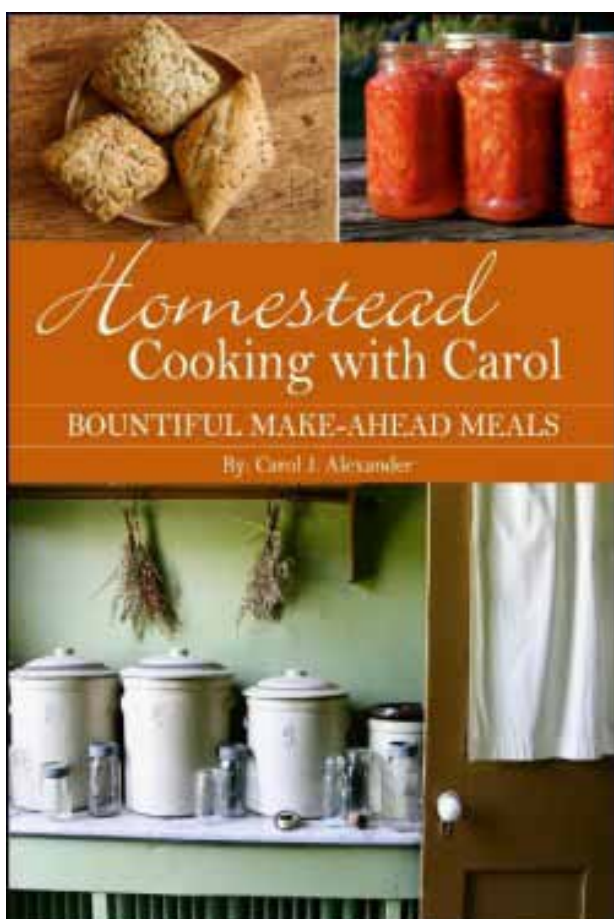
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