



**Homeschool
Primer**

A Back to
School Guide

FROM SCRATCH

{life on the homestead}

August/September 2014

**Apartment
Homesteading:**
How to get started

FARMHER:
Women in
Agriculture

Soapmaking:
LESSONS FROM THE
QUEEN

**Sustainable
Living**

Backyard Farming • Homestead Living • Animal Husbandry • Homeschooling

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR & PUBLISHER

It's August again. For those lucky souls with the right climate, that means summer is winding down, ready to give way to Autumn leaves, crisp nights and beautiful winter gardens. For others — like ourselves here in North Carolina — it is time for the oppressive heat of a thousand suns to bear down upon the earth like the judgement of the Creator.

But that's OK: When you are devoted to homesteading, sustainable agriculture and the like, you learn to take the seasons as they come.

For us, this is the season to get back to school, which is why we're running our inaugural Homeschool guide.

In this issue, you can find stories on the ins and outs of homeschooling. If you homeschool your kids, you've had people ask you "What about socialization?"

We answer that question with an article of the same name.

Find out how to incorporate nature into your homeschool lessons with a story from Leslie Tribble.

With the end of Summer upon us, it is time for us to start thinking about

breeding our animals and winterizing our animal enclosures.

Find out all you need to know about goats, from a child's viewpoint in an article provided by Tessa Zundel.

Read about the latest superfood: Camel Milk!

We've got information on pasteurizing milk with the makers of Vat Pasteurizers.

And on a more somber note, Janya Veranth writes about her first pig harvest and how it impacts her decision to raise pigs for slaughter.

We've got stories on Fall gardening and cooking with 1840 Farms.

We've got methods of preserving your harvest with our recipes for fermenting.

And if you have bees — or access to beeswax — we've got a way to get away from using plastic wrap with beeswax cloth.

And a whole lot more from the best writers around.

Enjoy!

Steven and Melissa

Simple Fence Solutions— for many species & situations!

Why users like electric netting...

- Even for new users, it takes less than 10 minutes to go from a roll of out-of-the-box netting to installed net. The rolls, with posts built-in, are not heavy (average 23 lb).
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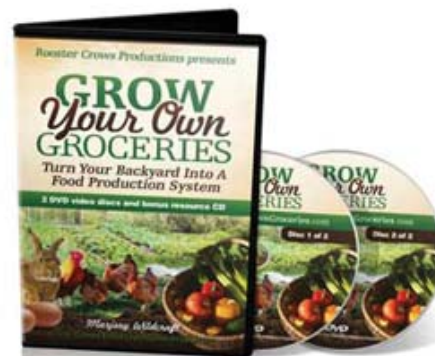
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Contributors Thank You



CHRIS
MCLAUGHLIN
*Home-Ag/
Gardening Editor
A Suburban Farmer*



JENNIFER BURCKE
*Food Editor
1840 Farm*



AMANDA WITMAN
*Homeschool
Contributor
Oak Meadow*



ANNE-MARIE
FAIOLA
Soap Queen



SERES
KYRIE



CASSIE
LANGSTRAAT

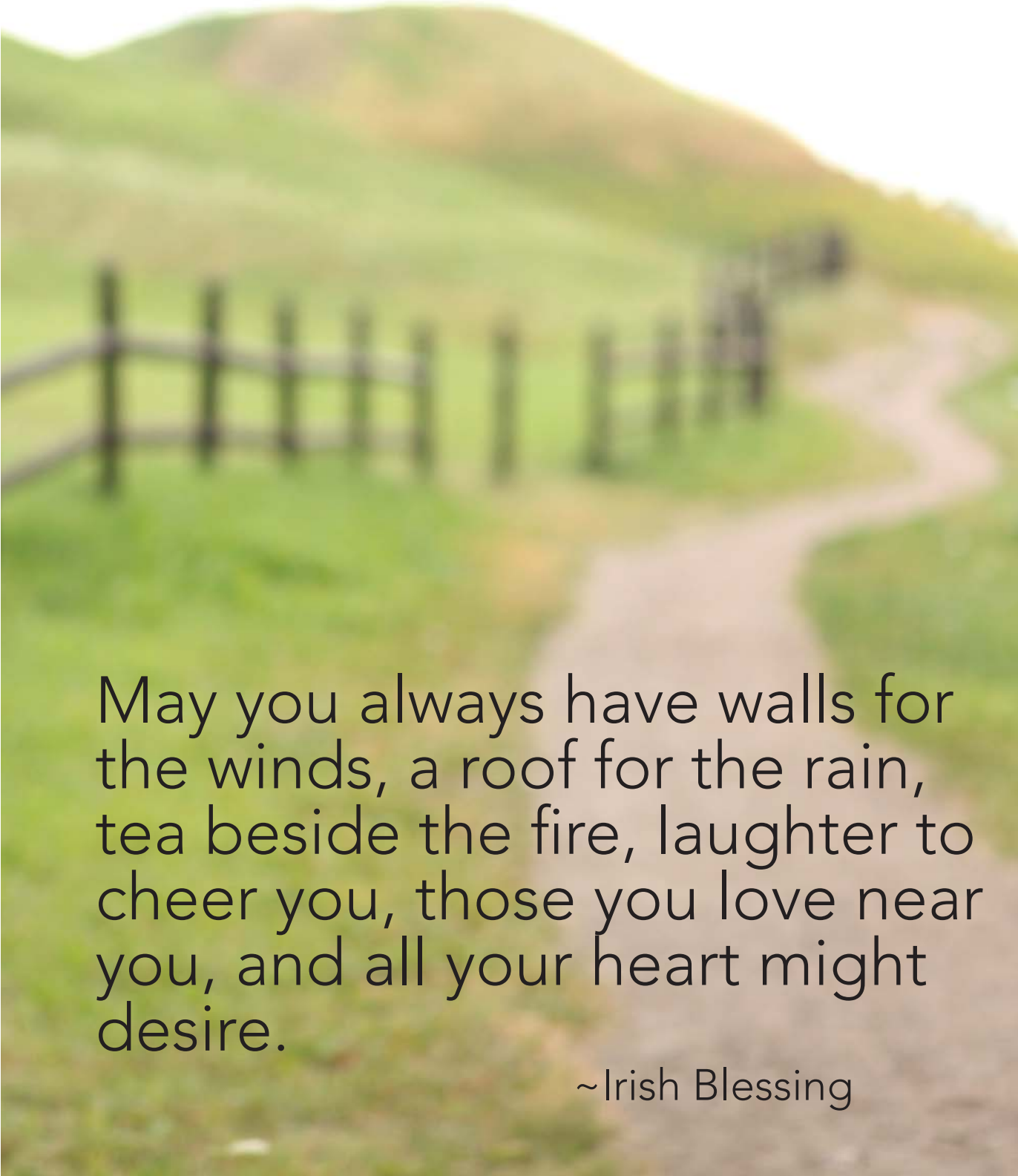


Steven Jones
Editor



Melissa Jones
Publisher





May you always have walls for
the winds, a roof for the rain,
tea beside the fire, laughter to
cheer you, those you love near
you, and all your heart might
desire.

~Irish Blessing

READER PHOTOS



Christa sent this photo from a Candid take on life.



Natalie and Charlotte with Hushpuppy.



Tina Tisi sent a photo of her backyard.



Joyce Oben sent us this picture of her tomato blossom.



A reader sent us this photo of tomatoes from a Texas garden.



Basil from Michael Andrews' garden.



Preserved! Pickles and beans from Rose Meister.



Amy's daughter with her favorite crop, Sunflowers!

Homestead Roundup

Relevant News Briefs from around the Globe

MISSOURI VOTING ON 'RIGHT TO FARM BILL' AUG. 5

Missouri residents will vote on Aug. 5 for a "Right To Farm" Amendment to the state constitution.

The amendment will promise ranchers and farmers the right to 'engage in farming and ranching practices.'

The bill, according to proponents, will "protect Missouri from out-of-state special interests," according to the website of Missouri Farmers Care.

The organization further states the amendment will save jobs and defend "farm families."

Opponents to the amendment, like the Humane Society of Missouri, say the law will weaken anti-puppy mill measures.

Watch fromscratchmag.com on and after Aug. 5 to find out whether the bill passes.

NEBRASKA DIGITIZING HOMESTEADING RECORDS

Nebraska recently became the first state to digitize its homesteading records, according to a press release from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

The records were amassed by the

General Land Office and were used by officials to track homesteading claims after the Homestead Act of 1862 was passed.

The release stated the project was completed through the efforts of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Family Search, Fold3.com, Ancestry.com, the National Archives and Records Administration and the Homestead National Monument of America.

"Scholars are already mining the information found in these records," said Rick Edwards, director of the Center for Great Plains Studies at the University of Nebraska. "I believe that once the records of all the homesteading states are digitized and indexed, scholars will find so many surprising insights that it will lead them to propose a whole new understanding of the settlement of the American West."

The records can be accessed for free at the Homestead National Monument of America near Beatrice, Nebraska, all UNL libraries, the National Archives and Records Admin centers and Family History Centers.

Find out more here.



NASA HELPS TRACK WORSENING DROUGHT CONDITIONS

According to a release from NASA a study shows that 75 percent of water loss in the Colorado River Basin is from underwater sources.

The release states the basin, which includes vast swaths of land in the western part of the United States, has suffered from severe drought since 2000.

The basin lost about 53 million acre feet of water (approximately double the amount of water that filled Lake Mead) from 2004-2013.

The system recorded changes in mass from rising or falling water reserves and its impact on gravity over the course of a period of time. Find out more about the study [here](#).

FARM AID COMING TO NORTH CAROLINA

Farm Aid will be held on Sept. 13 in Raleigh, NC at the Walnut Creek Amphitheater.

Jack White will be joining the show this year along with Willie Nelson, Neil Young, John Mellencamp and Dave Matthews.

Farm Aid has been helping family farmers all across the United States



for 28 years. The organization creates markets for farmers nationwide, offers help to farms and families in crisis and helps promote good farm and food policy. The annual concert is an all-day music and food festival and features an all star lineup of artists and genres.

The festival features locally produced and grown food with HOME-GROWN Concessions.

The festival also features the HOMEGROWN Village, where concertgoers can meet farmers and learn more about family farms. Find out more about the show [here](#). Watch fromscratchmag.com for more information as we cover this year's show.

HOMESCHOOL



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Lap Desk- Amazon, \$26



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AubergineFox, \$13



Desk organizer - DesignAtelierArticle, \$39.99



Alphabet Pebbles-
HappyEmotions, \$50



Penmanship Pillow - Home Room - dirtsastudio, \$40

FARMHER

PHOTOGRAPHY: MARJI GUYLER-ALANIZ

Iowa native and photographer Marji Guyler-Alaniz knew that women have always been an important but largely undocumented aspect of agriculture — she is determined to change that with her photography project — FARMHER.

Tell us about FARMHER: What inspired you to start it?

I had recently left my corporate career of 11 years to spend more time with my small children and figure out what I wanted to do next.

Along with millions of others, I saw the Dodge commercial with the Paul Harvey speech, “God Made a Farmer” paired with beautiful images of farmers and farm scenery from around the country.

I loved it when I first saw it. It depicted agriculture in a beautiful way. About a month later I read an article that criticized the fact that there were very few women shown in that commercial. I had an ah-ha moment where I realized that the image of a farmer, of agriculture, was

sorely outdated. I woke up in the middle of the next night, woke my husband up too, and told him I had figured out what I wanted to do; photograph women farmers. I wanted to update the image of a farmer, of agriculture, and with that, FarmHer was born.

Do you have an agricultural background?

My grandparents farmed, my mom grew up on a farm, and my cousins still farm the family land. While I didn’t grow up farming, I was raised living in the country in a small community in Iowa. After college I worked at a crop insurance company for just over eleven years, so that was a large part of my agricultural experience as well.









Tell Us about a few of your favorite FARMHERS?

Honestly, there is something I have loved and is a favorite in each woman I have photographed.

One thing that is an overall favorite, a similarity of every woman I have photographed; they are proud of who they are and what they do.

They absolutely love what they do and want to share that.

Another overall thing is that even though each woman shares that underlying love for what they do, each and every farm or ranch I have visited is unique in its own special way. The pictures are always different and unique and I love that.

Some of the ones I have really enjoying photographing are as follows:



**Kellie Gregorich,
Westwind Farm, LaMotte IA —**

Kellie has a love for agriculture and is so active and involved in promoting agriculture as a whole that I was excited to meet her and see her in action. I loved her pride in working on her farm the day I was there. She was working alongside her dad and I also loved experiencing that family bond that exists on so many

family operations. I loved watching her care and admiration for the cattle they raise. I loved seeing her excited about FarmHer.

**Lois Reichert,
Reichert's Dairy Air, Knoxville IA**

— Lois was the second woman that I photographed. Those women who were among the first I photographed really put their trust in me. I had nothing to show them, no website yet (I was working on building my set of images before putting up the site) and no real great plan of how I was going to use the images ... other than I knew I needed to spread them as far and wide as possible to really start to make people think about the image of agriculture. The pictures I took that day were some of my favorites and have been used quite a bit for FarmHer projects and press over the past year. The morning that I spent at Lois' dairy was truly enjoyable and I again loved seeing her connection to the goats she raises and cares for. I loved seeing her use their milk to carefully craft her artisan cheeses and I love the story that is told through the images of that day. Most of all, I love that Lois put herself out there and invited me to her dairy so I could capture that beauty!

**Kim Waltman,
Full Circle Ranch, IA**

I found Kim through a blog post she shared on the Women in Agriculture forum on Facebook and simply put, I liked her story. Her extended family's legacy was ranching though she had never been interested in pursuing that life. Following a career in







public relations, Kim and her family started their Full Circle Ranch in southern Iowa. Kim is intent on learning as much as she can and growing as a RanchHer. I visited Kim on the morning when they were driving about 200 head of cattle over hundreds of acres, on horseback. That was the first time I had been on a horse in years but if I was going to capture the images, I needed to do it. So, I quickly learned that I could in fact take pictures and ride a horse! I loved watching Kim, her kids and all

of the local help that had shown up from around their small community. Following the cattle drive was vaccinations, castration and branding. It was all so interesting to watch and photograph.

What are some of the challenges you have observed for women in farming?

I think overall, women love to talk,



network and communicate and the fact that most of these women are in a rural area doesn't give them an outlet to do that with other women like them. I continually hear from women who enjoy FarmHer and use the pictures to remind themselves that they are in fact part of a much larger group of women out there, though they aren't able to connect with and see those women on a regular basis.

Also, I think overall, ag businesses have mostly focused on the males

in farming but haven't directed a lot of resources towards the women involved in those operations.

Though I will say since I started FarmHer, and started paying attention, there are ag groups and businesses out there that are doing a great job of providing resources and focusing on these women.

Do you think the number of women in agriculture is growing? Is so, what is causing the trend?

In my opinion, there has always been a large, but undocumented, population of FarmHers.

Women have always had a role in family farms but their role has largely not been documented or shown.

They are there, day in and out, doing chores, raising food, caring for livestock, helping run the business.

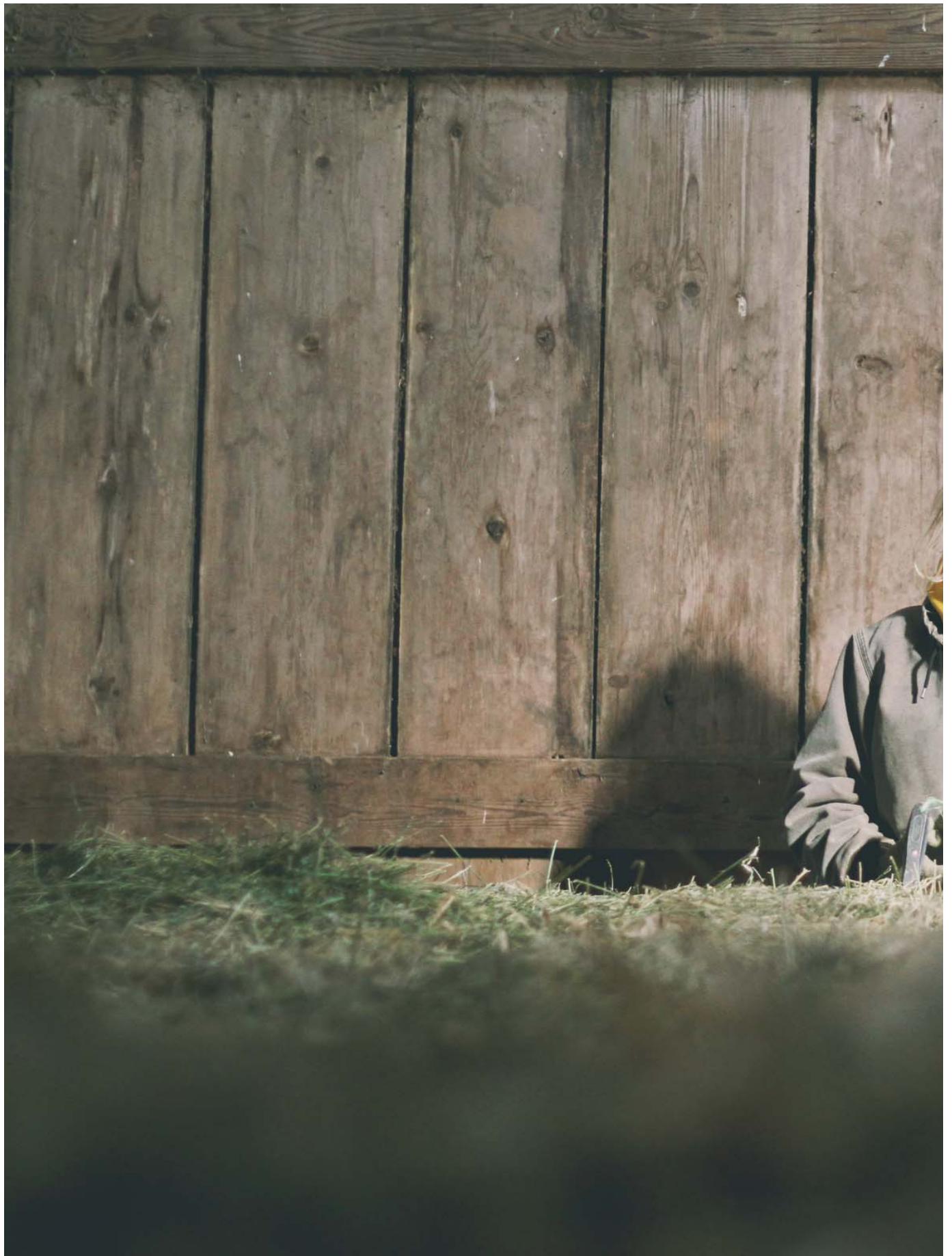
I do think the number of women in farming has increased in recent history, is currently growing, and will continue to grow.

There are a few things at play here in my mind.

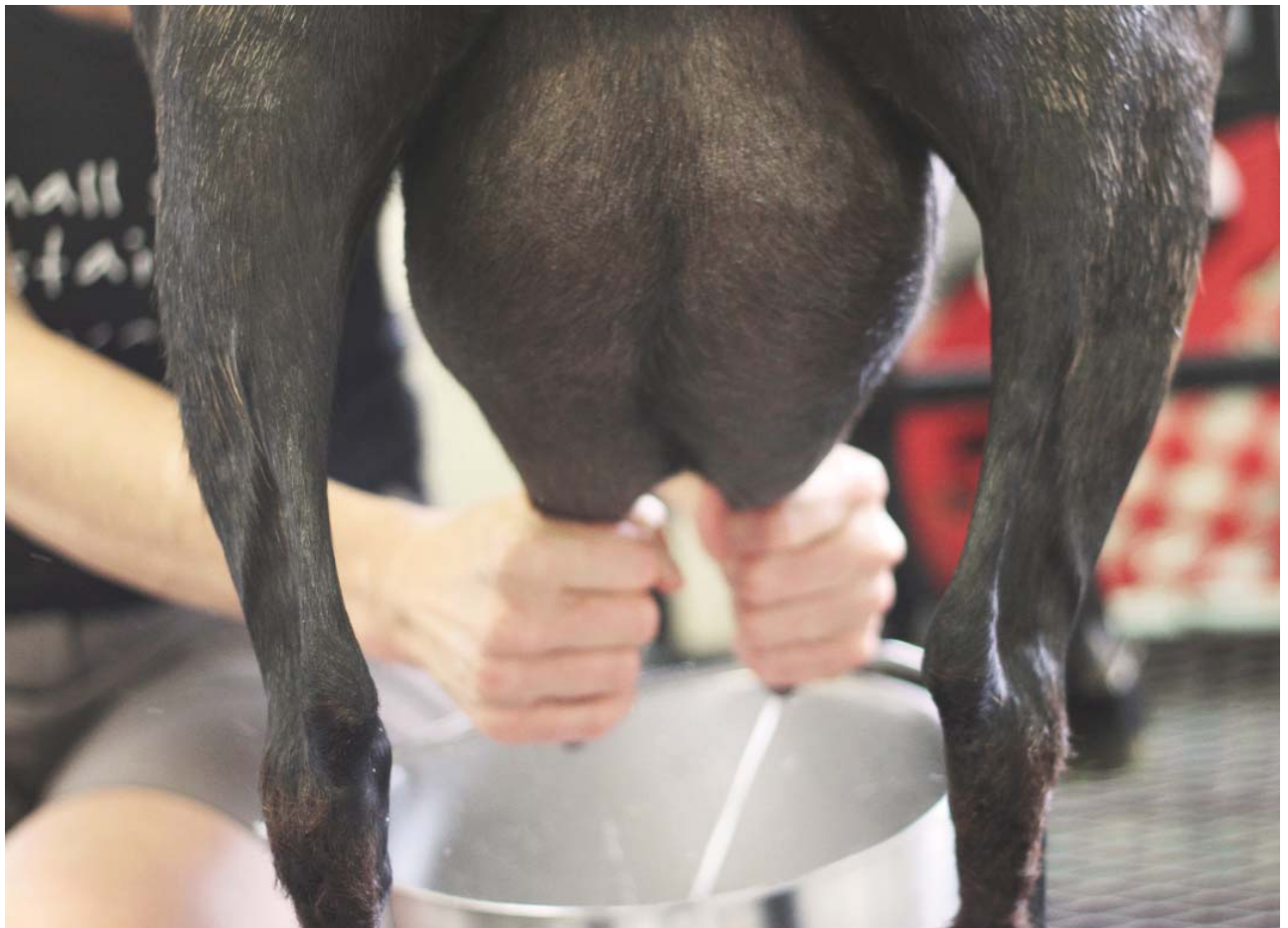
I think that a strong desire to grow food for themselves, their families and their communities drives these women to begin a farm.

Maybe they grew up on a farm and are returning to their roots, or started from scratch but either way it is happening.

Another trend is that farm land is being handed down through families and the ownership of the land is shifting. These are just a few of the trends I have seen, though I am sure there are many more reasons at play.











I HAVE SEEN THAT STRONG COMPASSION FOR THE ANIMALS THEY RAISE AND RIDE. A LOVE FOR THE LAND THEY TEND. A DESIRE TO PROVIDE GOOD FOOD TO THEIR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES.

What have you learned about the agricultural industry since you started photographing FarmHers?

I think one of the biggest surprises to me is the wide variation in types and sizes of operations. Throughout my career I worked with mostly large, conventional row crop type operations. Through FarmHer I have seen so many more varying operations in size and type. You always hear that family farms have gone away.

I would strongly disagree.

Though the numbers show they are dwindling, the family farm is definitely alive. Just head out of town and you will pass farm house after farm house, barn after barn, livestock corrals, gardens, fields, ranches and farms. My concept of agriculture that I had a few years ago has definitely changed; it has broadened.

My respect for farmers and ranchers, and anyone involved in the ag industry has increased significantly. I have always had a respect for what they do ... after all without farms we would have food, fiber or renewable fuels. We wouldn't have that ever-so-important culture of agriculture. But when I visit a farm and hear their

stories of success or failure. I see first hand how hard they work every single day. Through good weather and bad. Through up markets and down. I see that they work harder than most. They have a true love for what they do and that makes me have a huge respect for everyone who was born into or chooses this path.

What is something you wished everyone knew about women in farming?

I always like to point out that women in farming is not a new thing. It is just new to put a spotlight on them. I would also like to reiterate that through focusing on the women only, I have seen a side of farming that I love, but in a different way than I ever realized existed. I have seen that strong compassion for the animals they raise and ride. A love for the land they tend. A desire to provide good food to their families and communities. I have consistently experienced these traits at every farm or ranch I have visited. Though I think farmers have always had that love and compassion, I tend to think FarmHers have a little more of it. Women are nurturing by nature, and in farming or ranching, that shows.

FARM HER

Merchandise

Wear your agriculture pride with apparel from FarmHer.



Tell us about the product line...what products do you offer?

Back when I first started the photo project, my brother had helped my print a few T-shirts so that I could give them to the women I photographed as a thank you. Soon after I had a few people ask me if they could purchase a T-shirt and I realized I needed to make them a little more widely available. As it turns out, aside from being the name of my photography project, FarmHer

also describes these women. They can wear the shirts and have a sense of pride over who they are and what their life's work is. I have a few different T-shirt designs that either say "FarmHer," "Fearless is the FarmHer" or "Love the Land, Care for the Community, Feed the People." I also offer long-sleeved shirts, hats, bumper stickers, tank tops and headbands. Soon I will be adding hooded sweat-shirts and a few other cold-weather options.

I recently expanded the shirt offerings to include "GardenHer" and



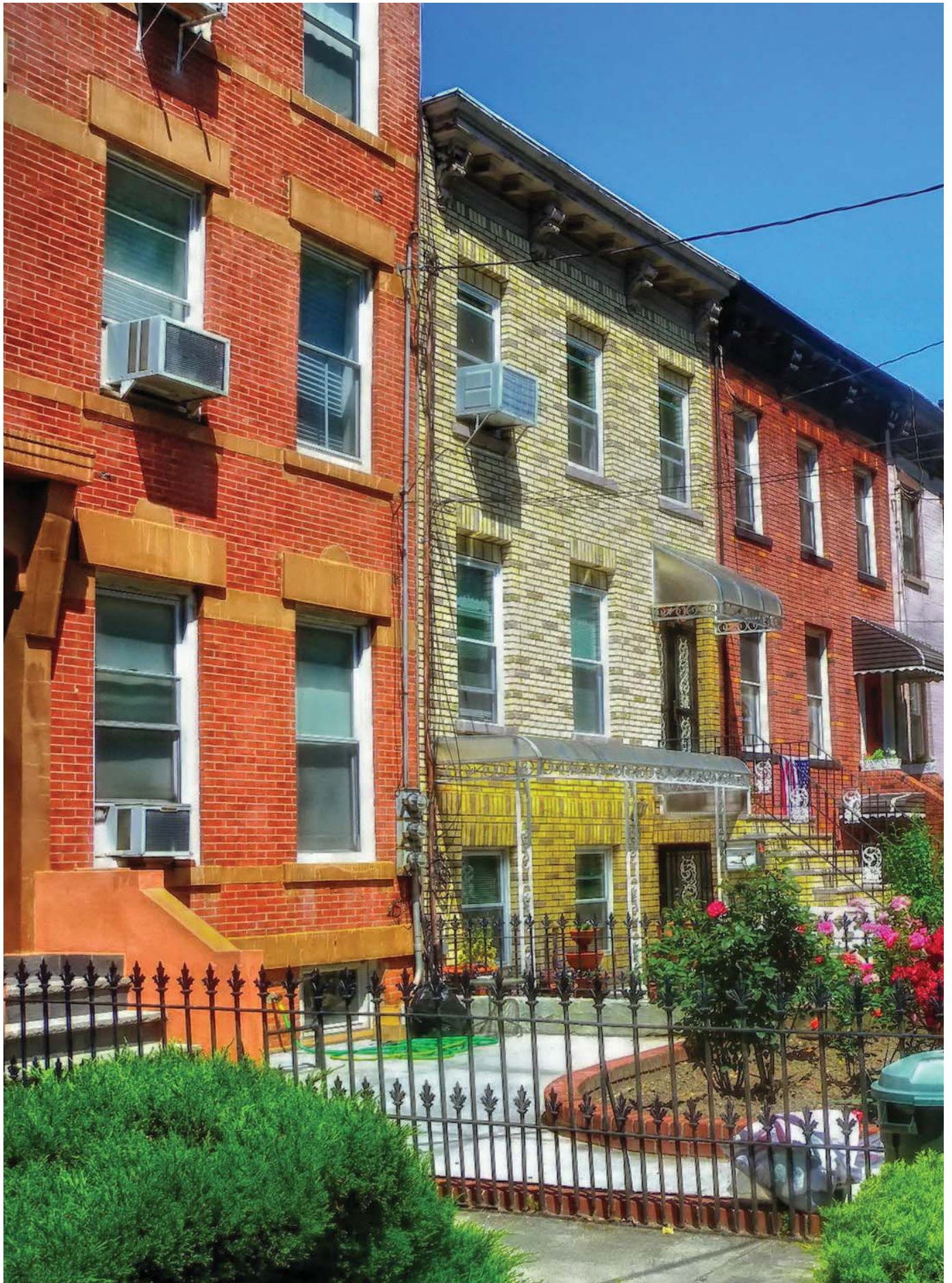
"RanchHer" as well. I also offer all of the photographs for sale on my website and have my first ever calendar nearly ready for sale. All exciting ways to share FarmHer with the world!

All of the items are for sale on my website. I also offer a 10% off code for your entire FarmHer purchase when you sign up for the FarmHer mailing list on my website at: <http://www.farmher.com/farmher-mailing-list>

I periodically send out messages to the list when I release a new gallery

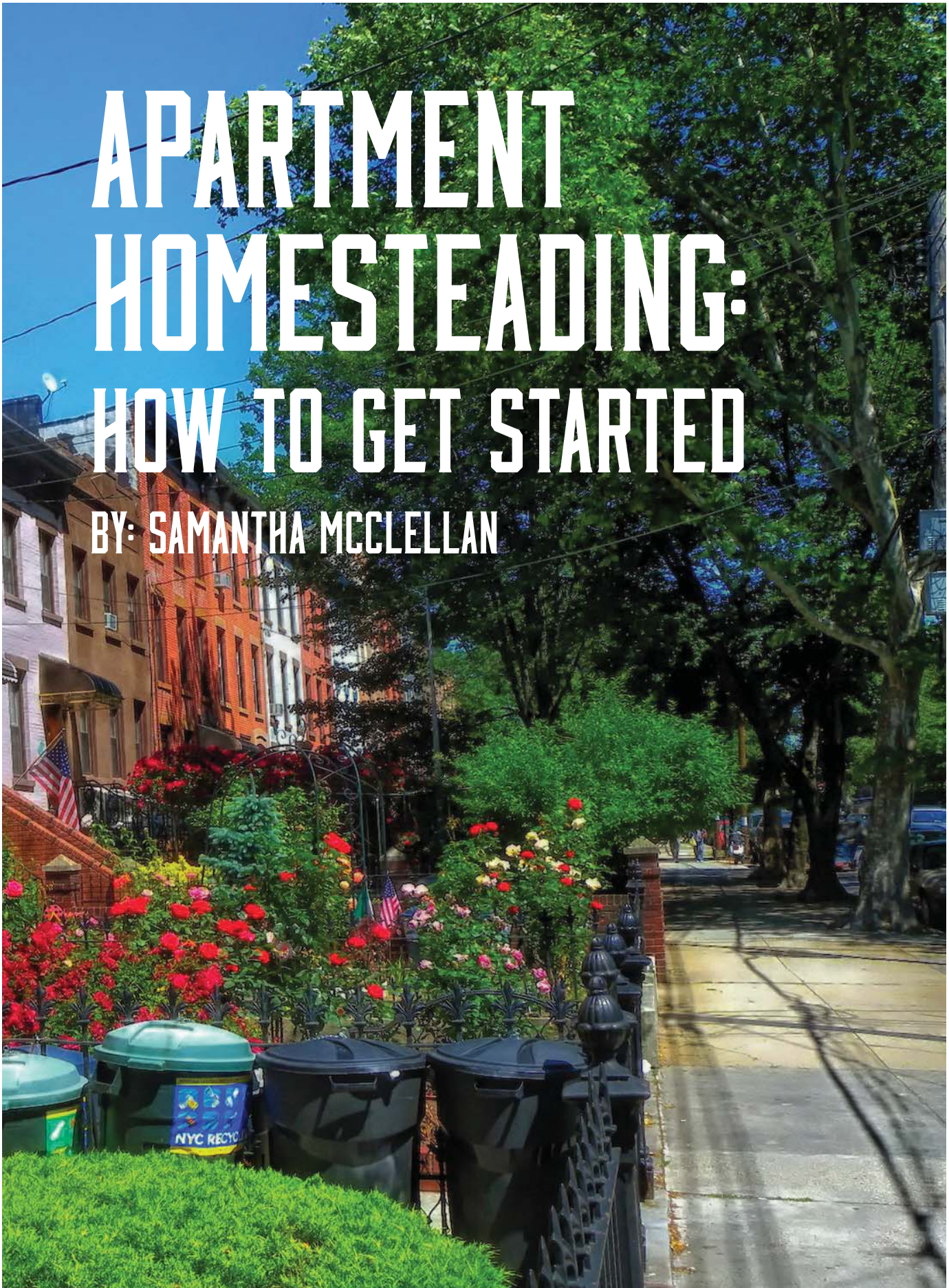
of images, have a merchandise sale or have something relevant to share with the FarmHer community.

Though I don't currently have a book for sale, I would like to share that I am in the process of updating my FarmHer.com website to be a community for women in agriculture. Rather than just a place for people to come view the images, the website will soon be a place where women in agriculture can connect, learn and share from each other. It will be an experience built specifically for these amazing women.



APARTMENT HOMESTEADING: HOW TO GET STARTED

BY: SAMANTHA MCCLELLAN



In today's society the term "homesteading" is usually used to describe a lifestyle that demonstrates self-sufficiency, sustainability and simplicity. Why then, is there the perception that in order to homestead, you need a house, acres and acres of land and an assortment of livestock? Can't the values of sustainability and simplicity be practiced outside of this context? In a world where an increasing number of people live in cities and rent their houses, apartments and condos it seems as if there should be a way to include everyone in the homesteading movement. Apartment homesteading is a concept that is gaining traction in many of the major U.S. cities and abroad. All over the country, there are people with balconies and patios filled with homegrown vegetables and herbs, people using solar power to charge their electronics, people composting, people canning local food for winter, and networks of people bartering and exchanging services as a means of creating more sustainable communities.

I found my way into apartment homesteading by making a resolution to live more simply and sustainably.

Step by step, I found myself moving away from a traditional life of dependence and excess and toward the homesteading way of life.

Now, my day is filled with many of the same activities as someone homesteading on a farm (with the exception of caring for livestock, I think that might be where my landlord draws the line!) Apartment homesteading affords many benefits to the homesteader, the environment

and the community at large.

Apartment homesteaders play a valuable part in supporting local farmers, in reducing energy consumption, pollution, and trash production, and in bringing the practices of natural living, sustainability and environmental awareness back into mainstream culture.

So, if you are one of the many people living in an apartment, condo, townhouse, rental home, or a house with not much land, and you are interested in starting a journey toward the homesteading way of life, here are some ways to get started.

Reduce Energy Consumption:

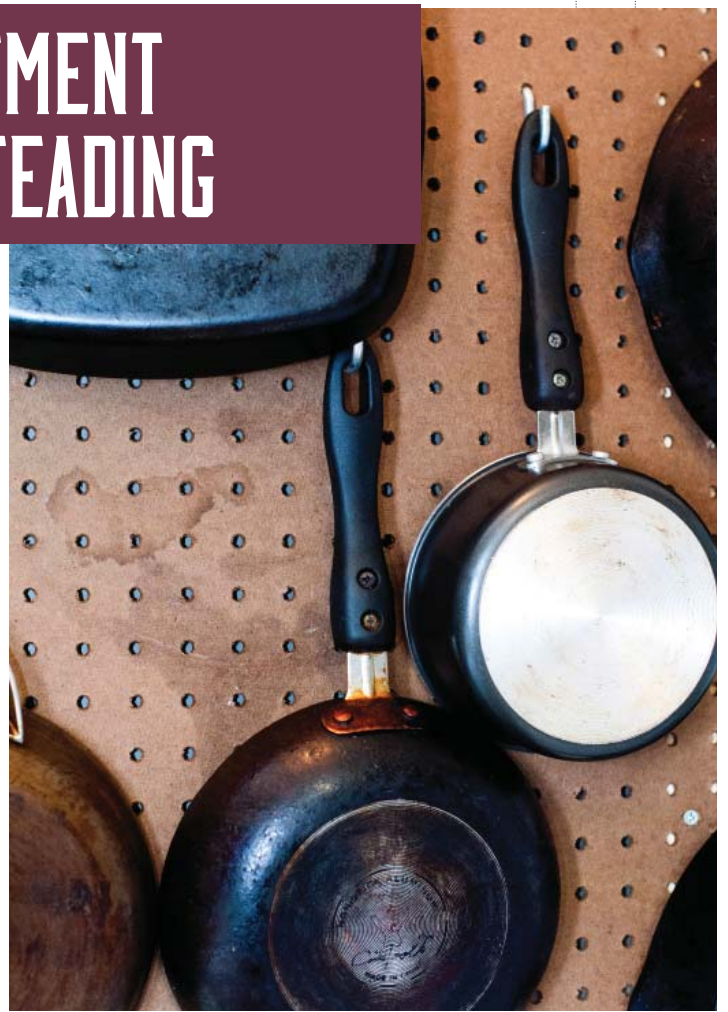
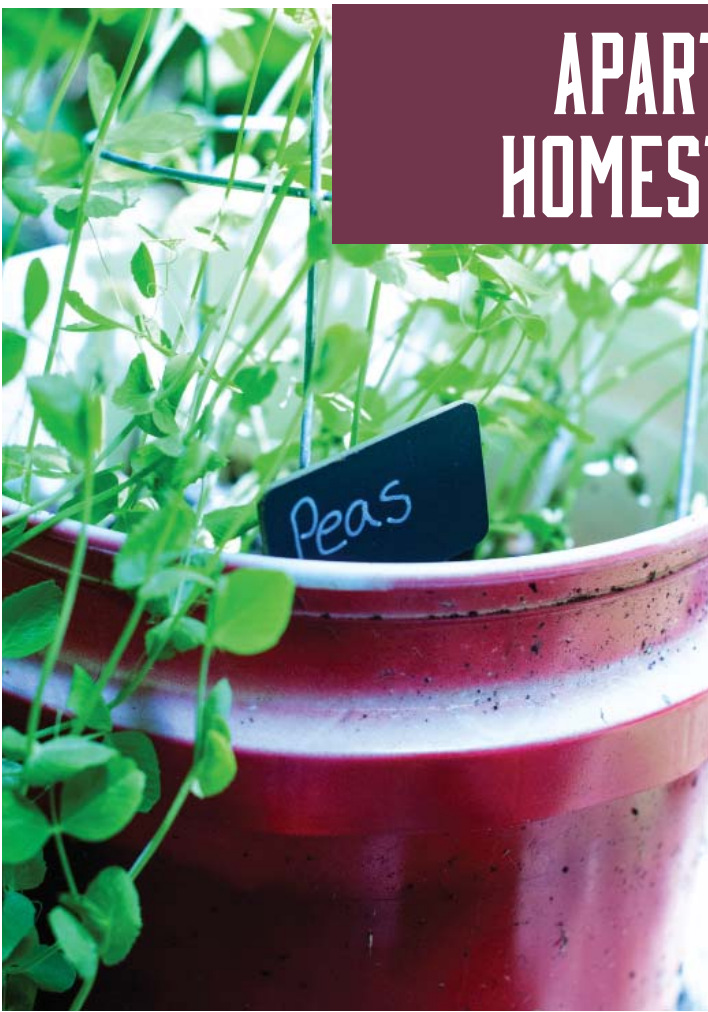
Living in an apartment, it is next to impossible to rely entirely on alternative energy sources, but you can cut down on your energy consumption a lot.

I'm not even going to touch on the basics like replacing your light bulbs with more energy efficient alternatives or turning off lights when they're not in use. If you want to take your reduction of energy consumption to the next level, I recommend going to your circuit breaker. It is amazing how much energy is wasted by electronics that aren't "in use"!

By doing the things listed below, my husband and I have taken our energy consumption from 800-900 kWh per month to about 500 kWh or less.

- Turn off your hot water heater every day. Most apartments use small hot water tanks that heat up in about 20 minutes. We have our hot water heater turned off all day. It only gets

APARTMENT HOMESTEADING





APARTMENT HOMESTEADING

turned on in the evenings in time for showers and washing dishes then — off if goes for the rest of the night. This one change easily cut our electric bill by \$20 a month!

- Cut the power to your stove, washer and dryer when they're not in use. These three major appliances are usually only in use during a small portion of your day. Cutting the power to these appliances will cause you little inconvenience, but it will save a lot of energy monthly.

- Turn off your central HVAC system. Yes, you heard me correctly. No, I'm not just talking about the few days every year that are in the 60's and 70's.

Apartments are small and heat up and cool down quickly.

They are also easily affected by small space heaters, fans, or an open window. In the summer our central system stays off almost entirely, unless the inside of the apartment gets too far above 80 degrees.

In that case we turn the AC on long enough to cool everything down, usually before bedtime, then use fans in our bedroom and turn the central system off again.

We keep things shaded and in the early morning and late evening we keep the patio door open to cool things down naturally.

In the winter, we bundle up and insulate our apartment as much as

possible by using plastic sheeting or weatherizing kits on our windows and patio door and we place an emphasis on heating ourselves rather than our apartment.

At night, we use a (safe) space heater in our bedroom, which shuts off after about an hour or two and we use lots of blankets and occasionally a heated mattress pad.

Just never let it get cold enough to freeze the pipes!

Grow and Buy Local Food:

As I mentioned earlier, one of the biggest roles apartment homesteaders play in the community-at-large is in their support of local farming.

- Shop at the farmer's market- Most major cities and even a large percentage of smaller towns have farmer's markets now.

If you live in a major city like I do, you may even be close to a state farmer's market, many of which are open seven days a week!

For things that cannot be bought at the farmer's market or for times of the year when the farmer's market is unavailable, look into joining a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture group) or buying meat in bulk from a local farmer to store in your freezer.

- Grow your own produce- no matter how small your apartment is you most likely have a balcony, patio or sunny window that would be great

APARTMENT HOMESTEADING

for growing herbs and vegetables. You may even be able to grow plants on the roof of your building if you can access it.

What about your office? Is there a sunny window or an accessible rooftop there?

If none of these areas work, look into renting space in a local community garden — many organizations such as the YMCA offer this option.

You will be amazed at how much produce you can grow in a small space. I live in a ground-floor apartment and have filled my patio with a container-garden of onions, spinach, garlic, peas, bush green beans, and herbs!

- **Preserve local food:** Chances are you are not going to be able to grow all of your own food for the year on your patio, but that doesn't mean you can't practice homesteading values all year long.

When foods are in season and you can buy them from local farmers, buy them in bulk and preserve them through freezing, canning, and fermenting.

Properly canned food lasts for up to a year on the shelf.

Turn spring strawberries into jam, late summer peaches into spiced canned peaches, cucumbers into pickles, and tomatoes into sauce. Freeze herbs and, while you're at it, turn your linen or laundry closet into a pantry or "decorate" the top of

your kitchen cabinets with all of your mason jars of canned goodies!

There is always space for homegrown food, even in a tiny apartment.

Compost:

Right now you are probably laughing to yourself (or at me). You're thinking, "Composting in my apartment! Yeah that would go over great with my landlord!"

Well don't be too quick to laugh. You're going to need some fresh compost for all of that patio gardening you're doing; and composting will substantially reduce your waste production!

There are a number of different ways to compost without just having an open pile of "garbage" drawing attention.

- **Make your own compost bin:** This is the method I chose.

I bought a cheap, medium sized, plastic trash can with a lid and I drilled holes up and down the sides and in the bottoms to allow for ventilation.

This is my patio compost bin. In my kitchen, I have a lovely little ceramic pail with a lid into which all of our kitchen scraps go.

A few times a week the pail gets emptied into the patio bin.

To my landlord and neighbors it just looks as though I have a benign plastic trash can on my patio,

but in truth I have over a year's worth of healthy compost decomposing. If you do not live on the ground level and your compost bin is discreetly sitting on your balcony, be intentional about adding worms to your compost.

- Use the worm bin method: Vermicomposting or worm composting is a great option for apartment dwellers because it takes up less space than a large compost bin, can be kept on your balcony or patio, decomposes food scraps rapidly, and is almost completely odorless. Worm bins can

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be purchased already constructed or easily made.

- Use an electric composter: While I believe that either one of the two options above are ideal, because they don't increase your energy consumption, I include this option because it is ideal for apartment dwellers with no patio or balcony. An electric composter can be used indoors, it is relatively small, and it produces healthy compost in a matter of weeks.

Create, Produce, and Reuse:

This step is one of the simplest yet most all-encompassing ways to start homesteading in an apartment. The opportunities to do things yourself — use reusable vs. disposable products, and create products rather than buying them — are limitless! Doing this demonstrates a respect for the environment and commitment to self-sufficiency and sustainability. Here is a small list of some projects to get you started:

Cook your own food – don't eat take-out every night just because there is a pizza place downstairs.

Use cloth napkins, un-paper towels, cloth rags and wash-cloths instead of their disposable paper counterparts.

Use cloth diapers

Ladies, use a **diva cup or mama cloth** to cut down on waste production

Hem your own clothes or repair small holes or tears yourself

Give handmade gifts
Make your cosmetic prod-

ucts like lotion, shaving cream, lip balm and shampoo (this not only saves money and reduces consumption but is healthier too!)

Use products that can pull

“double-duty”: I use liquid castile soap as my dish soap, body wash, mopping solution, toilet bowl cleaner, plant spray and baby wipe solution!

Buy things that are gently-

used: utilize thrift stores, ebay, craigslist, and local or online organizations like your local Freecycle.org group or area trading groups to find things used, for free or at discounted prices.

Bike, walk, and ride public transportation when possible

Try using home and natural

remedies for ailments like colds, seasonal allergies, bug bites, and headaches.

Read more from Samantha at sweetpotatoesandsocialchange.com. She blogs about apartment homesteading and the paleo diet. She is a professional photographer in Raleigh, NC.

APARTMENT HOMESTEADING

Homesteading, in my opinion, is the act of standing up and taking control and care of the impact you have on your community, your economy and your environment to ensure that it is a positive one.

Those homesteaders who work hard everyday on their farms producing locally, sustainably-sourced meat and produce are taking control of our food supply and our environment to ensure that we have healthy families and healthy farmland in the future.

Apartment homesteaders can take control of our cities and suburbs to keep them from becoming more and more polluted and alienating. We can reduce the burden being placed on our power grids and trash dumps, and we can affect social change one small choice at a time.

Don't ever feel that because you don't have a farm you can't be a homesteader. Homesteading doesn't start with your barn or your garden it starts with your goals, your dreams, and your intentions.

I wish you well as you begin your apartment homesteading journey!

Soap Making

By Anne-Marie Faiola,
Soap Queen

Making soap at home is easier than you might think! It is a fun, practical craft that allows your creative juices to flow.

This soap features soothing lavender essential oil and oatmeal to nourish your skin and calm your senses.

Egg yolks are packed full of skin loving vitamins and omegas.

The combination is heaven for your skin!





Equipment needed:

- Electronic scale capable of measuring in 0.1 oz. increments
- Cardboard or newspaper to protect your workspace
- Heat-resistant measuring pitcher for oils- large enough to hold 48 oz. (Glass, plastic, or stainless steel)
- Heat-resistant measuring pitcher for lye water - large enough to hold 16 oz.
- Small glass, plastic or stainless steel cup- capable of holding at least 8 oz.
- Thermometer - Not aluminum
- Measuring spoons
- Rubber gloves
- Safety goggles
- Soap mold- Tupperware that holds at least 4 Cups

Ingredients:

- 11 oz. Olive Oil
- 5.6 oz. Coconut Oil
- 5.6 oz. Palm Oil
- 1 Egg Yolk at room temperature

- 1 oz. Lavender Essential Oil
- 2 Tbsp Whole Oats
- 2 Tbsp Dried Lavender Buds
- 1 Tbsp Mineral Oil
- 6.8 oz. Distilled Water
- 3.0 oz. Sodium Hydroxide (Lye)

Safety First: Suit up with the proper equipment before handling lye. Gloves, safety goggles and long sleeves are a must. Lye is caustic, and will cause burns and severe injury to eyes and skin if they are brought into contact. Make sure there are no kids, pets or distractions present, and always soap in a well-ventilated area. We recommend covering your working surface with a layer of newspaper or cardboard for protection. Quickly wipe up any traces of lye or raw soap as they can be hazardous. In order to avoid any possible cross contamination, mark any tools you use for making your soap as "Soap Only". You don't want to be eating it!

Prep Work: Pour 1 Tbsp of mineral oil into the Tupperware. Using a paper towel, spread this around the entire container, wiping all the sides. This will keep the soap from sticking to the mold and make un-molding easier.

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be bumped, and you may even want to make a small sign or label so others know the mixture is lye. Allow to cool for 20 to 30 minutes.

Step 3:

Melt the coconut and palm oil. Heat oils in 1 minute bursts. Make sure oils are completely melted; they should be about 100F and no longer opaque when heated.

Step 4:

In the largest measuring container, carefully measure and combine the coconut, palm, and olive oil.

Step 5:

Pour out approximately 1/4 cup of the oil mixture into a small cup. Add 1 egg yolk to this mix and stir with a whisk until smooth. Set aside.

Step 1:

In the 16 oz. heat resistant container, measure out 6.8 oz. of distilled water. This is important, as regular tap water contains trace minerals and chemicals that can negatively affect the soap.

Step 2:

In the 8 oz. container, carefully measure out exactly 3 oz. of lye crystals. Again, make sure you are in a well-ventilated area, and wearing gloves and safety goggles. Slowly pour the crystals into the distilled water you measured, NEVER the other way around. Stir with a spoon until all crystals are dissolved. Mixture will become very hot and steam. Do not breathe the steam. Set the mixture aside in a safe place where it will not





tom of the container while tipping the shaft to the side before blending.

Step 9:

Add the egg yolk/oil mixture to the soap batter. Scrape the sides of the cup to make sure you get all the egg out. "Burp" before blending this into the batter for 5 seconds. The soap should now have the texture of thin pancake batter. If it is thinner than this, blend in 2-5 second bursts until the texture thickens slightly.

Step 10:

Pour 1 oz. of Lavender Essential Oil into the soap. Using a whisk, blend the oil into the soap until the entire batter has a uniform appearance.

Step 6:

In a small glass container, measure exactly 1 oz. of Lavender Essential Oil. Set aside.

Step 7:

Check the temperature of the lye/water mixture and the oil mixture. If they are not both under 110F, allow to cool longer.

Step 8:

Once the lye/water mixture and the oil mixture are under 110F, you are ready to begin soaping! Slowly pour the lye mixture into the oils container. Using a stick blender, blend soap for 10 seconds. You can avoid creating unsightly bubbles by tapping — or "burping" — the blender on the bot-





not force soap out of the mold or it may break or have indents in the bars. If it is still sticky after 48 hours, let it set a few more days before attempting again.

Step 14:

After soap is unmolded, you can cut it into bars. Use a sharp kitchen knife and cut bars that will fit well in hand. Place bars on a cookie cooling rack and let cure for 4-6 weeks. This curing time allows excess moisture to evaporate and will result in a long lasting bar of soap. Enjoy!

If you want more great recipes and projects to try, be sure to check out our website at SoapQueen.com. We would love to see your soapy creations, post your photos to our Facebook or Instagram page!

Step 11:

Pour approximately 1/2 of the batter (2 cups) into the Tupperware mold. Sprinkle the top of this layer with whole oats.

Step 12:

Slowly pour remaining soap over a spatula. You want this layer to sit on top of the layer you just poured. The spatula will help spread the soap over the first layer, and keep it from breaking through.

Step 13:

Sprinkle top of soap with lavender buds. Set soap aside, and allow it to harden for 48 hours before attempting to remove it from the mold. Do





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SOLUTIONS FOR THE DAIRY FARM

Many people swear by the benefits of raw milk, but, if you are planning on going into commercial milk production or starting your own ice cream creamery chances are you will need to get a pasteurizer. Almost all states require milk to be pasteurized before selling it for human consumption. And that's why we're glad companies like Jaybee Precision exist.

Jaybee Precision makes and produces pasteurizers great for any scale of dairy production.

Their machines are built to satisfy any need a dairy farmer might have, be it a small producer, raising a few goats, to larger producers with hundreds of cows.

The great thing about Jaybee's products is they're made in America and have been for more than 20 years.

We recently had a chance to talk to Bob Madewell, the company head, about his company and the product he makes.

In particular, for us at From Scratch magazine, the thing that makes Madewell's equipment great is the investment.

While some might be put off by purchasing equipment like a pasteurizer (or chillers or any of the other great equipment Jaybee Precision produces), it's important to remember the value of such equipment.



When purchasing pasteurizers, and similar equipment, the focus is usually on starting a business, which helps put the cost benefit in focus for consumers.

"Because of the quality of materials, and the design, our Vats will provide years of low cost dependable operation," Madewell said. "This will allow for a very good return on investment, and increased profitability for our customers over the years of ownership."

We interviewed Madewell about his



equipment and his company.

WHERE IS YOUR EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURED?

Our Vat Pastuerizers are manufactured in Dayton, Ohio.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN MAKING PASTEURIZING EQUIPMENT?

We have been making pastuer-

izers for approximately 20 years.

WHAT MAKES YOUR PASTUERIZERS STAND OUT?

Our Vat USA is made and 3-A and FDA (our national sanitary standards organizations) approved including the most recent specifications. We use only top grade stainless steel, and provide only 3-A approved components. Our Vat has several safety features including a custom GFCI. Our products have a full 1 year war-

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ranty, with a 3 year warranty on the Anderson chart recorder. We also support our products with a service technician that's available 24-7.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR PASTUERIZERS MAKE THEM A GOOD INVESTMENT FOR SMALLER PRODUCERS?

(We offer a good) value to our customers because of the high levels of

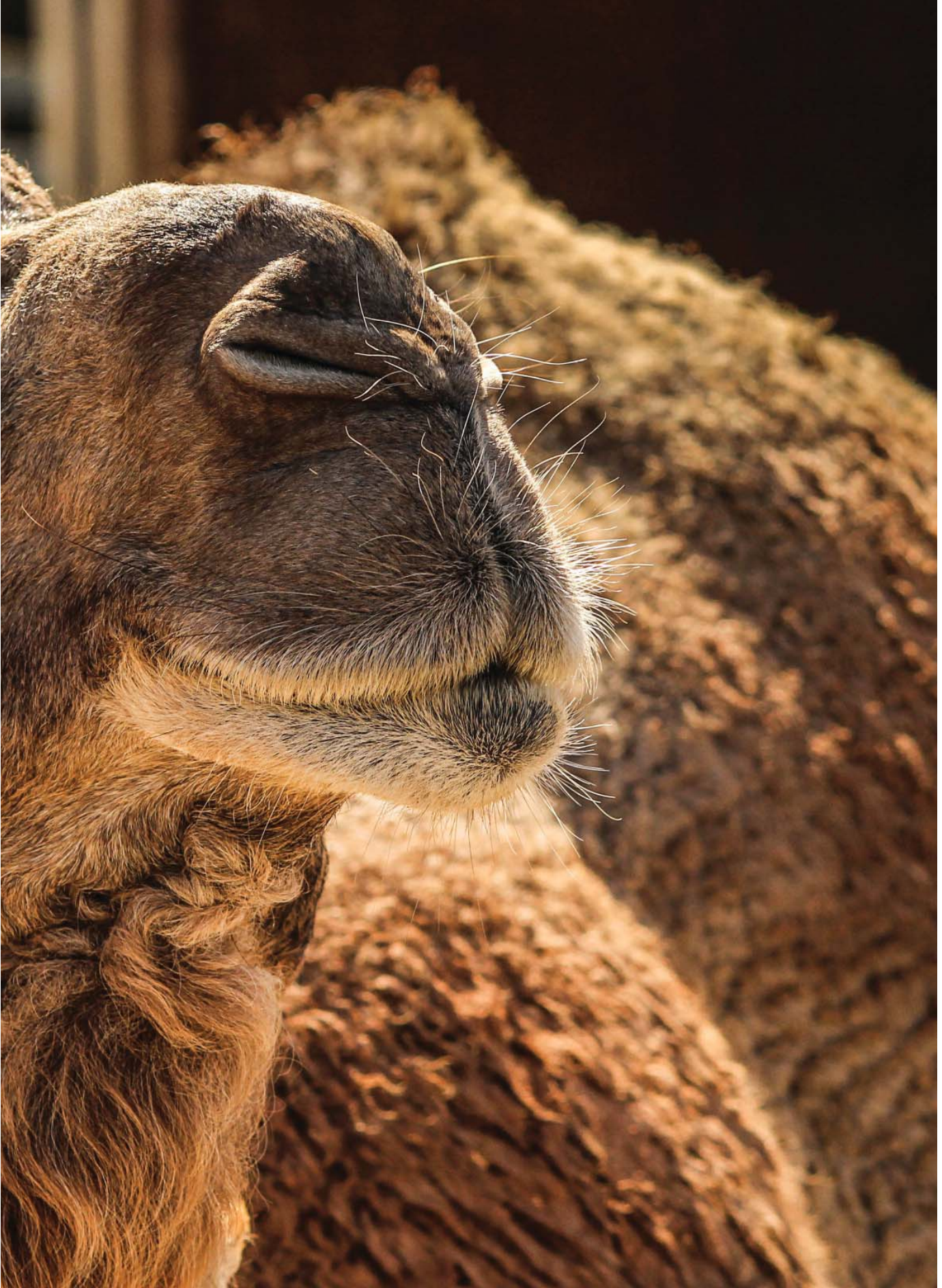
quality and support. They are built to last, are easy to install, and designed so our customers can easily do their own service without the need of paying for costly outside service calls. We have pastuerizers that have been operating for well over 15 years

Find out more about Jaybee Precision and the equipment they offer here.



CAMEL MILK

BY STEVEN JONES



If you want to start a dairy business, you could do worse than milking camels.

Yep. Camels.

It may sound weird, but camels, like any other mammal, can be milked.

And with growing recognition of the benefits of camel milk, against a whole host of medical problems (hepatitis, diabetes and more), the price of camel milk is at a high, regularly selling for \$10-\$20 per pint.

That's right, "pint." Not gallon.

Which means a dedicated camel milker could pull down at least \$80 per gallon.

So, where did all this interest in camel milk come from?

Probably Millie Hinkle.

Hinkle is a naturopath (a healer with a holistic approach to medicine).

And about half a dozen years ago, she decided to use camel milk to treat patients.

Traditionally used in the Middle East to treat liver disease, treatment of digestive problems and as a general tonic to improve health, camel milk has shown promise in treating autism, milk allergies, tuberculosis and Crohn's Disease, Hinkle states on her website.

Unfortunately, camel milk was illegal in the United States.

So Hinkle decided to do something about it.

"I had the law changed," she said.

She worked with a few government agencies to legalize camel milk (the FDA, the USDA, etc.).

Then finally, she could started doing work to study camel milk and its affect on various ailments.

Unfortunately, Hinkle said, she couldn't get the milk.

"There were no camel dairies," Hinkle said.

So, she went all over the country, convincing farmers to start milking camels.

A lot of the farmers she talked to thought the whole thing was just a fad.

But, Hinkle persisted and a few farmers tried it out.

"Most of these guys have made fortunes (now)," Hinkle said.

So, Hinkle, finally, after literal years of work, got her hands on some camel milk.

And so far, she's been thrilled with the results.

She's used it to treat kids with autism, patients with Crohn's Disease and more.

She's looking into using it to treat veterans with Gulf War Syndrome, using the milk's natural cleansing abilities to detox patients.

So, let's say you want to start a camel dairy. What do you do?

First, you'll have to have housing for the animals. Of course you'll have to purchase milking equipment, including a pastuerizer (most states require dairy products — of any kind — to be pastuerized).

But, most importantly, you'll need a couple of camels.

The animals, Hinkle said, will run \$15,000-20,000.

Which, isn't cheap, but Hinkle said the investment will turn around quickly.

Hinkle is all for bringing in new dairies.

She hopes the prices of the milk will fall, allowing more people to use the medicine provided by camel milk.

"I am totally amazed," Hinkle said.



"The health benefits have been so overwhelming."

USING CAMEL MILK

If you're interested in trying camel milk, Hinkle suggests you work with a professional.

Camel milk is so rich, she said, that even a couple of ounces can make a patient who isn't adjusted to it sick. So, if you do try camel milk, start with a low dosage -- a few ounces once a day.

As you build up a tolerance, increase the dosage slowly, until you start to feel the difference.

Hinkle said some patients may need to start with a single tablespoon once a day until they've established a tolerance.

ABOUT HINKLE

Millie Hinkle, ND, DH, HHP, has been in practice since 1987. Having received her training in the U.S., Germany, and France, she is board-certified by the American Naturopathic Medical Association. Other certifications include a Holistic Health Practitioner through the American Association of Drugless Practitioners. She also holds a nursing degree, has training in Radiology, and an associate degree of applied science in dental hygiene. She also holds a Bachelor of Science degree and a Bachelor of Health and Physical Education. She has also held memberships in the National Health Federation, the American Preventative Medical Association, and the Coalition for Natural Health. Read more about Hinkle and camel milk [here](#).



THYME ROASTED RADISHES


BY: ANNIE BERNAUER

INGREDIENTS:

1 pound of fresh radishes
2 TBS butter
2-3 sprigs of fresh thyme chopped fine
dash of sea salt

DIRECTIONS:

Cut the root and stem off of the radishes. Quarter the radishes. Melt the butter in a pan on medium heat. Add the quartered radishes to the butter. Sauté for about 8-10 minutes or until the whites of the radishes start to lightly brown. Toss in the fresh thyme and sauté for another minute or two. Serve and enjoy!



I've never really liked fresh radishes. I haven't planted any in the garden for a number of years. Then I ate thyme roasted radishes.

Wow! When I made them I didn't have time to put them in the oven. Instead I roasted them on the stovetop in a cast iron pan. I roasted them in butter, which in my opinion makes everything taste better! I paired the thyme roasted radishes with our favorite garlic roasted chicken recipe. It was a great alternative to a potato side dish.

These turned out so delicious! A roasted radish still has the flavor of a radish; it just doesn't have the spice to it. The only downside was that I only had one bunch of rad-

ishes to roast so there were none left for seconds.

Thyme roasted radishes are a great way to prepare one of the easiest vegetables to grow in a garden. This recipe is simple to prepare and is also a tasty side dish option for folks who are gluten-free. Radishes have a lot of health benefits. Not only does this dish taste good, it is good for you! Radishes are rich in vitamin C, folic acid, potassium, and fiber. Radishes are also said to have health benefits such as soothing a skin rash and relieving congestion.

The next time you are headed to a potluck or having guests over for dinner, wow them with a dish of thyme roasted radishes!

ANNIE BLOGS AT MONTANAHOMESTEADER.COM. CLICK HERE TO READ MORE FROM HER, INCLUDING MORE RECIPES.

BLOGGER PROFILE

THE HOMESTEADING HIPPY



Years ago, Heather Harris started blogging as a way for her children's grandparents to keep up with the family.

That blog turned into thehome-
steadinghippy.com and now Heather, the Homesteading Hippy, is blogging like crazy about her chickens, homesteading and the occasional guest post from her family detailing the foibles of living with a blogging maven.

She started homesteading in 2006 by starting her first garden. That original garden was only 32 square feet and didn't do so well, but she was hooked.

Now her family raises birds and rabbits, is active in 4H and has given over most of her property to homesteading activity.

"Having a manicured lawn is no longer a precedence," she said on her website.

But now the whole family enjoy

watching the chickens at least as much as watching television.

We got in touch with Heather, and her exuberant personality, recently.

WHEN DID YOU START BLOGGING? WHY?

I started in 2007 actually, as a way for my parents to be able to keep up with their grandkids over the 1800 miles we were apart. It evolved over time, as my life changed and has eventually become what it is now. My "current" hope is to encourage and inspire people to do for themselves what they once thought impossible, and to take charge of their own health, food, and future.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN INVOLVED IN HOMESTEADING ?

Roughly 7 years ... that is when we got our first pair of laying hens.



WHY DID YOU GET STARTED IN HOMESTEADING?

It was the thing to do? no, actually, It never really started as "homesteading" for us, it more or less evolved that way from 2 hens and a 4x4 box garden to what it is now.

WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?

To have one :) We take each year one year at a time. When my kids are all grown and on their own, my hubby and I would simply love to live in an RV, moving from kid to kid and using their internet, dirtying all their

towels and leaving them on the floor, eating all their food and complaining when the ice cream is gone and then taking off as the mess needs to be cleaned up :)

Honestly, we hope to one day be 90% self sufficient, and be able to barter for what we cant' raise ourselves, effectively "firing" the grocery store.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE THING TO GROW AND WHY?

Basil: My family can't get enough pesto during the summer. I have graduated to having to grow basil in 32 square feet of our garden in order to accommodate the pesto lovers.



WE LOVED THE BLOG POST BY YOUR DAUGHTER. CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT HER AND HOW HER INVOLVEMENT CAME ABOUT? HOW OLD IS SHE?

My 16-year-old daughter speaks fluent sarcasm. She says she learned it from me ... but ya know ...

Anyway, one night when I was making dinner, I stopped everyone from eating and decided that I wanted to use the recipe for a blog post the next day. Of course, that meant no one could eat until I had gotten the perfect picture. Tired of this happening, she began a tirade of "I wish everyone that reads your blog could know the real truth" ... so I offered to allow her to tell it in her own

words. The post took approximately 6 hours for her to write, as she and her brothers collaborated on all the things I had made them help me with over the prior few months. Things like shucking corn on the front porch, chasing down a certain chicken for pictures, being made to wait to eat dinner ... ;) I am sure there could've been lots more she wanted to write, but I am proud that she kept it on a professional manner. After all, do you really want to know how much dust there is on my bookshelves?

WHAT'S ONE THING YOU WISH EVERYBODY WOULD DO AND WHY?

I wish that everyone would grow at

least one thing, even if it's just an herb on their kitchen counter. The flavor of fresh and the joy of being able to say "I did that" can't be measured. It's just amazing what you can do when you allow yourself to just do it.

YOU'VE GOT A LOT OF DIY POSTS ON YOUR BLOG.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE? WHAT'S THE EASIEST?

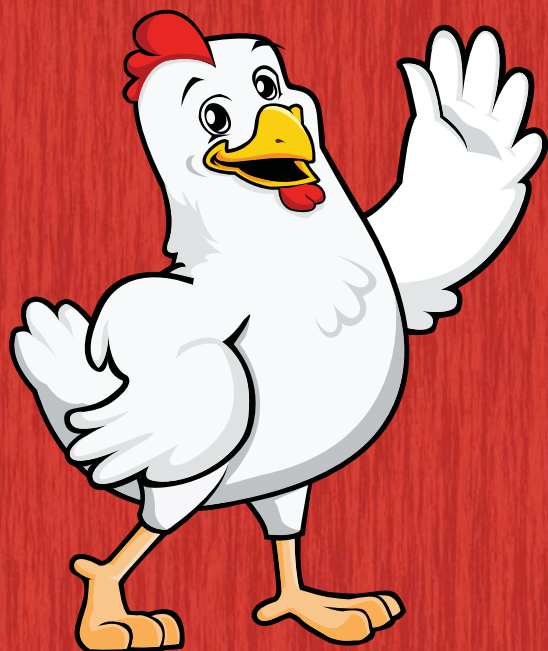
Most of my DIY posts can be done in 10 minutes or less, and that's because I do them on the fly. When I am sharing a DIY post, it's because the idea hit me about 15 minutes before the post went live. I would

say that I love the post on making your own drinking glass (<http://the-homesteadinghippy.com/diy-spill-proof-mason-jar-lid-straw-holder/>) It's my favorite, because it's really the first DIY post I shared on my blog and my entire family was involved in the making of them. (No fingers were harmed in the making of the lids, just an FIY)

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO ADD?

2+2=4?

Read more about the Homesteading Hippy [here](#).



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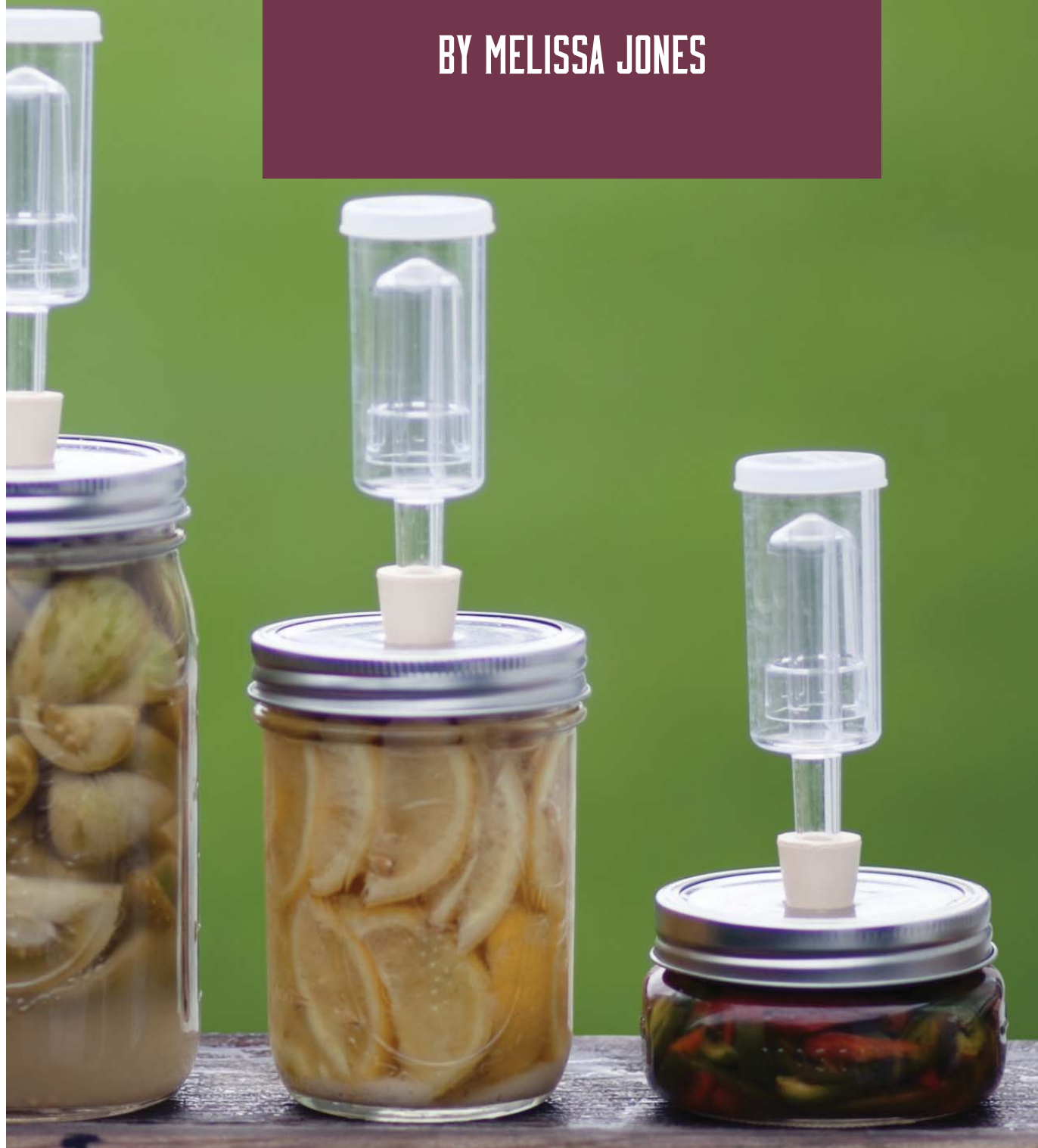
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THE JOY OF FERMENTING

BY MELISSA JONES





For a few thousand years now, people have been fermenting foods. Many of the foods — even the highly processed ones — we all (guiltily) enjoy are fermented: Chocolate, soy sauce, coffee, olives and many, many more.

And while the process may seem mysterious, it is actually quite simple.

Raw fermentation, the process in which many foods are transformed from regular vegetable to tangy, delightful fermented foods — think sauerkraut and kimchi — are easy,

safe and incredibly healthy.

Health benefits of fermented foods
Fermenting foods requires taking food, in this particular case, vegetables, adding salt and allowing naturally occurring lactic acid bacteria to partially digest the starches in the food transforming them and preserving them.

In the process, the microbes that facilitate the transformation make the food easier to digest, create antioxidants and release vitamins and minerals.

The microbes that grow in the food

are also healthy for the digestive system (think yogurt, another fermented food).

The microbes in the human digestive system like fermented food. Fermented foods have been shown to restore stomach acid pH and were also used as a traditional treatment for ulcers.

PROCESS

Quite simply, the fermented vegetables we tried had at best, three ingredients — salt, water and vegetables.

We used mason jars, although some home fermenters have used plastic mayonnaise containers or any jar they have lying around the house.

Some people even use 5 gallon buckets covered with cloth.

The food then ferments in the jars (or other containers) over a manner of days or weeks.

Once the process is finished (a matter of taste more than anything, some people prefer their food strongly flavored while others prefer theirs milder) the food is packed into jars and refrigerated, halting the fermentation process by causing the microbial activity to go dormant.

During the process, gas is produced. The gas must be released, but exposing the material to air limits the fermentation process.

Many home fermenters “burp” their jars by opening the jars allowing the gas to escape and closing them. If you have more than a few jars, however, this process gets time consuming — and quite frankly, annoying — really fast. That’s why we use Fermentools products.

Their air locks come with special lids, allowing gas to escape and limiting the air exposure to the product.

They’re also sturdy enough for multiple uses, which means after we’re done with this batch, we can wash them and use them all over again. Fermentools also sells himalayan salt.

The great thing about fermenting your own food is you can use additions like himalayan salt to increase the mineral content of your food. It’s an easy way to add healthy trace minerals to your diet.

Resources:

Find out more about Fermentools fermenting kits and products and fermenting [here](#).

KIMCHI



KIMCHI

INGREDIENTS

- 1 head cabbage (about 2 pounds)
 - 1/4 cup sea salt or kosher salt
 - Water
 - 1 tablespoon grated garlic
 - 1 teaspoon grated ginger
 - 1 teaspoon sugar
 - 8 oz korean radish
- sliced scallions to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

Grate the cabbage separately (or slice. We prefer grating because it exposes more surface area, aiding in the fermentation process). Leave the garlic, ginger and sugar separate for now.

Salt the cabbage and massage it, until it softens and produces heavy amounts of juice.

Cover the cabbage with water. Place a cloth over the bowl and let it sit for about 2 hours.

Rinse the cabbage three times and set it aside.

Take the garlic, ginger and sugar and add water, making it into a paste.

Combine all the vegetables, draining any excess juice, and add the paste. Add red pepper to taste. Pack the kimchi into jars and allow it to ferment for several days (we ferment ours on the kitchen counter and keep it out of direct sunlight).

Cap with a air lock or burp the kimchee as needed.

Taste it as it ferments to find out how strong you want it. Once it gets to the right spot for you, then change the lid on the jars and put it in the fridge.

Repeat the process often as possible to keep yourself in kimchi. You'll thank us.



FERMENTED ONIONS



FERMENTED LEMONS



**FERMENTED
GREEN TOMATOES**



FERMENTED LIMES

FERMENTED ONIONS

INGREDIENTS

- chopped onions
- 1 cinnamon stick per jar
- 1 tsp cloves (per jar)
- 2 tsp peppercorns (per jar)
- thyme
- oregano
- 1 tbsp salt (sea salt, kosher salt or mineral salt)

INSTRUCTIONS

Filtered water as needed

Mix the onions and salt. Pack part of the onions into jars. Add one cinnamon stick, cloves, peppercorns, thyme (to taste) and oregano (to taste). Cover with filtered water and apply the airlock. Allow to ferment to taste. Once there, trade out the air lock lid with a standard lid and store in the fridge (or any suitably cool place, if you're lucky enough to have a root cellar)

FERMENTED LEMONS

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound lemons
- ¼ cup salt

INSTRUCTIONS

Slice the lemons into small slices (you should get about 12 slices per lemon). Keep the peel on.

Pour salt over the lemons and stir, making sure to cover all the lemons thoroughly. Pack into jars and cover with the juice from some of the lemons. Apply the airlock and ferment to taste. Once fermented enough, remove the lock and apply a standard lid. Store in the fridge.

FERMENTED LIMES

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound limes
- ¼ cup salt

Slice the limes into small slices (you should get about 12 slices per lime). Keep the peel on.

Pour salt over the limes and stir, covering all the limes thoroughly. Pack into jars and cover with the juice from some of the limes. Apply the airlock and ferment to taste. Once fermented enough, remove the lock and apply a standard lid. Store in the fridge.

FERMENTED GREEN TOMATOES

INGREDIENTS

- Enough green tomatoes to at least fill a jar
- garlic (about clove, finely chopped, more if preferred)
- About 1 tsp of peppercorns
- 2 tbsp salt
- 1 quart filtered water

INSTRUCTIONS

Boil the salt in the water until dissolved. Allow to cool to room temperature. Slice tomatoes into at least quarters (eighths is better). Pack tomatoes, peppercorns and garlic into a jar (or jars, depending on how many you're making). Pour salt water brine over tomatoes, covering the tomatoes. Apply airlock. Allow to ferment to taste. Remove lock, apply a standard lid and store in the fridge.

FERMENTING

FERMENTED JALAPENOS

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound jalapenos, sliced (the more seeds you leave in the mixture, the hotter the end result)
- 2 cups filtered water
- 1 tbsp salt (kosher salt, sea salt or mineral salt)
- Sliced garlic to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

Add the salt to the water and boil, until the salt is dissolved.

Allow the brine to cool to room temperature.

Pack peppers, and garlic flat in a jar.

Pour brine over the peppers until they are covered. Apply airlock.

Allow to ferment to taste.

Remove air lock and apply standard lid. Store in the fridge.





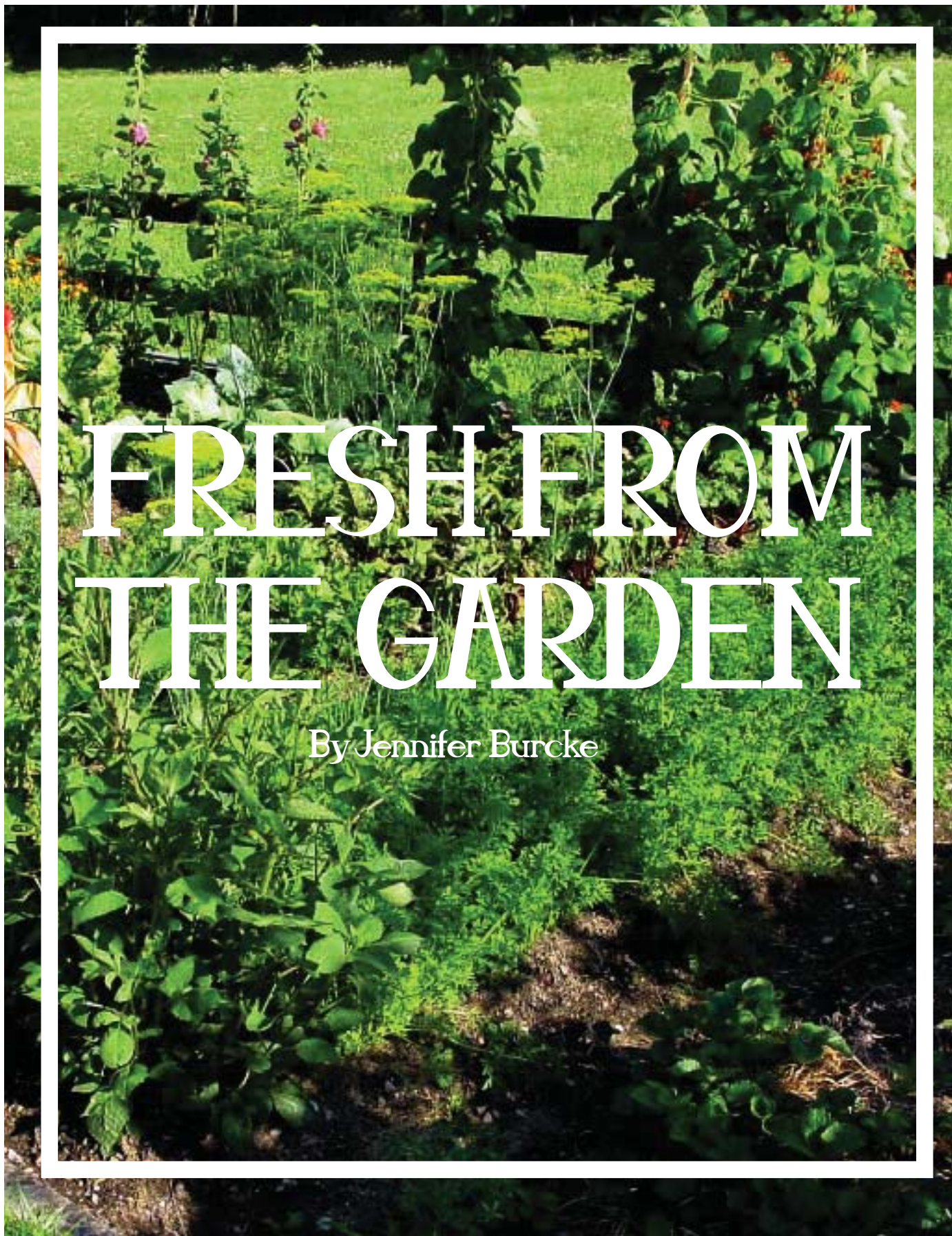
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Learn why Fermentools is the best way to make nutrient-rich probiotic at fermentools.com



It only takes a few minutes and a scant few steps around our farm to understand why this is my favorite time of year. A stroll through our garden shows the promise of the harvest to come and the fresh ingredients that will be featured on our dinner table today. Crops in various states of their growing cycle abound and each day seems to bring with it a new, exciting development. For centuries, family farmers have been enjoying the same thrill of walking through their gardens or fields and planning their meals according to what was at its best. Their meals focused on what was available in abundance and the harvest's surplus was preserved to be safely used once the growing season had ended. When cold weather set in, having a pantry and cellar full of preserved food was key to their survival.

Today, my family's survival doesn't depend upon the produce from our garden. When we fill the pantry with beautiful glass jars showcasing the best of what our garden provides this year, the work will feed our souls as much as it will fill our bellies during the long winter. We don't undertake the work of tending our garden and utilizing each drop of the harvest to avoid starvation. Instead, we willingly embark on this journey each year in order to increase our food independence and fill ourselves with pride when we sit down to our family table to enjoy the best of what our hands and hearts have helped

to produce. Here in New England, our garden is just hitting its stride. Raspberries are mid-season and providing pounds of beautiful berries every day. In the raised bed garden, cucumbers, summer squash, and gherkins are just beginning to reach harvest size and find their way into the farmhouse kitchen.

The concord grapes, blueberries, and blackberries are a week or two away from taking center stage in our farm's daily harvest.

We're watching our beloved heirloom tomatoes with the intense anticipation that they deserve. The vines are setting fruit along with the sweet peppers and eggplant out in the raised bed garden and hoop house. When the time finally comes to enjoy that first bite of heirloom tomato still warm from the sun, the entire family will feel a sense of accomplishment that will elevate the experience to something extraordinary.

As the garden grows, our recipes evolve to showcase the best of what our farm provides for our table. All year long, we look forward to preparing these family favorites using the very best of what is in season in the garden. Because these recipes highlight their ingredients at their seasonal best, we never tire of eating them. I hope that you'll enjoy serving these summer favorites to your family and friends as much as we do.

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

A Garden to Dye For

Chris McLaughlin

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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.



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GREEN CIRCLE GROVE BREAD AND BUTTER PICKLES

Yields 4 quarts

I love Bread and Butter Pickles for their distinct flavor. They're not a savory dill pickle; they're not a sweet pickle. Somehow, they reside in a space squarely in-between the two and deliver a flavor all their own. Their name is every bit as interesting as their flavor. During the Depression Era, these pickles were often the sole filling for sandwiches and also used as the main component of a small meal of bread and butter. Therefore, these pickles became as common as bread and butter, hence their name. They were inexpensive and simple to make without fancy ingredients or equipment, so they became common fare. Their delicious flavor has helped them to endure as a summer favorite for decades.

This recipe was originally shared by my friend Meredith at Green Circle Grove. It has been passed down for generations in their family. One bite and you'll understand why. These pickles are delicious and beautiful on the plate with a lovely golden tone thanks to the

turmeric in the brining liquid.

While I love to tinker with recipes, I made only a few changes to this one. The first time I made the recipe, I reduced the quantity of sugar and onions and completely removed the sweet peppers called for in the original recipe. I made this change for a simple reason: I had an overflowing basket of cucumbers that needed to be used immediately and didn't have enough onions or peppers ripe enough to harvest from the garden. With the removal of onions and peppers, I reduced the sugar needed to deliver the trademark flavor to the finished pickles.

The original recipe calls for three cups of sugar, eight small onions, and four red or green sweet peppers. If you have them on hand, feel free to slice up eight onions and four sweet peppers and add them to the cucumbers along with increasing the overall sugar to three cups. I have made this recipe in both variations several times now and one thing is constant: they're equally delicious!

Ingredients

- 3 cups (24 ounces) apple cider vinegar
- 2 ½ cups (480 grams) sugar
- 1 Tablespoon salt (I recommend using pickling salt which will result in a less cloudy brining liquid)
- 1 Tablespoon mustard seed
- 1 teaspoon celery seed
- 1 teaspoon turmeric
- 1 teaspoon dry mustard
- 4 quarts cucumbers, sliced
- 2 medium onions, sliced

Directions

If you plan to can these pickles for long-term storage, prepare the boiling water canner, jars, rings, and necessary equipment. I have found that tongs are the best implement for adding the pickled vegetables to the jars. Because this recipe uses turmeric, anything that touches the brining liquid will turn a lovely lemon yellow color.

In a large non-reactive pot, combine the vinegar, sugar, salt, and spices over medium heat. Bring the mixture to a boil, stirring occasionally until the sugar and salt have completely dissolved. Remove from the heat and carefully add the cucumbers and onions. Return the pot to the heat and bring to a gentle boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for five minutes to heat the vegetables thoroughly.

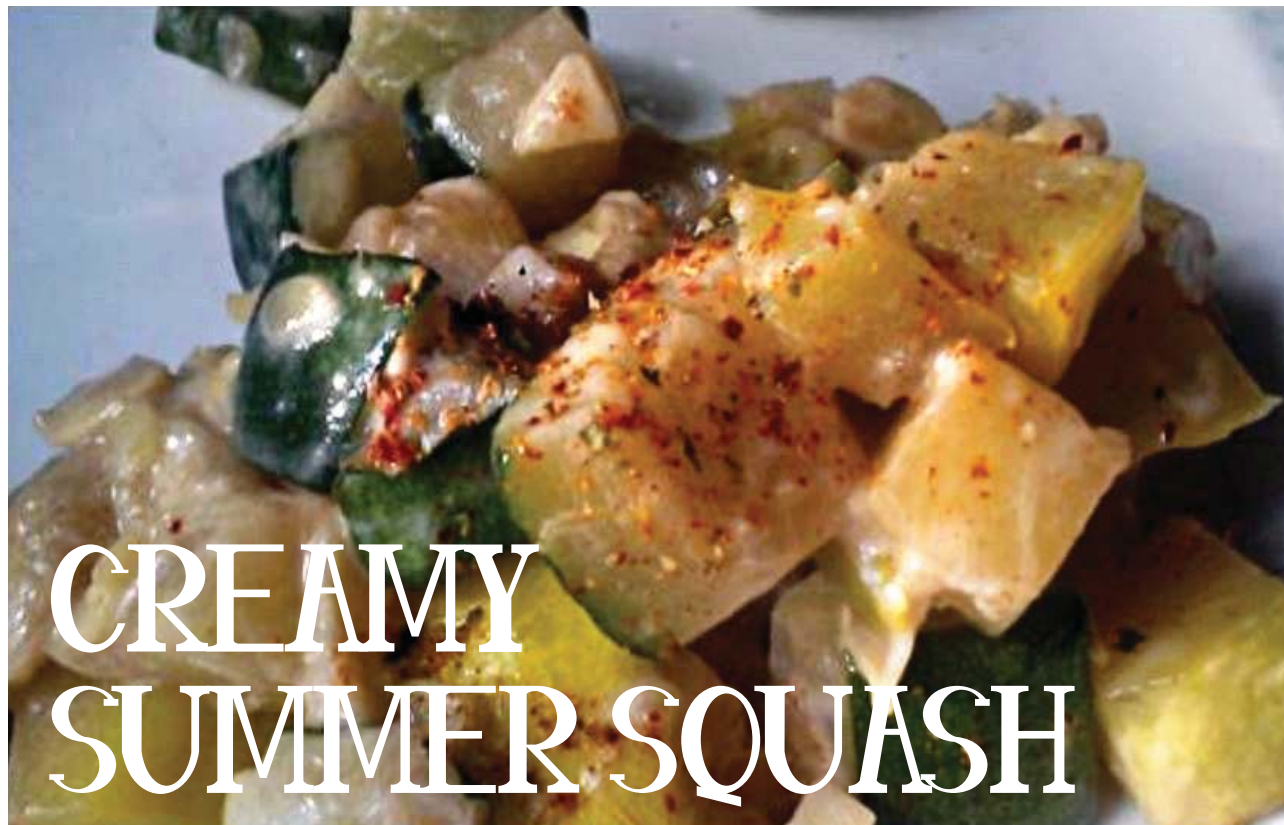
Remove the pot from the heat. Fol-

lowing good canning techniques, use tongs to fill hot canning jars with the vegetables. I like to fill the jars halfway and then tap the bottom gently on a towel covered counter to help loosen air bubbles. Continue to fill the jar with vegetables before slowly pouring a bit of the hot brine into the jar to leave ½ inch headspace. Using a small spatula, chopstick, or canning bubble remover, dislodge any remaining bubbles. If necessary, add more brine to the jar to achieve the ½ inch headspace.

Wipe the rim with a clean towel to remove any brine or spice from the rim as this small debris may affect the lid's ability to fully seal. Apply a warmed canning lid and accompanying ring to the jar before lowering it into the boiling water bath. Repeat until all of the jars are filled.

Return the water in the boiling water bath to a full boil and process for ten minutes. After the ten minutes have elapsed, turn off the heat, remove the lid, and allow the jars to remain in the hot water for at least five minutes. Remove the jars carefully using canning tongs to a tray or pan lined with a kitchen towel. Allow the jars to cool completely before labeling and storing up to one year.

Any half-filled jars of vegetables and brine can be allowed to cool as the full jars are boiling and then stored in the refrigerator. While their shelf life will be shorter, their flavor will be equally delicious!



CREAMY SUMMER SQUASH

This is my favorite type of seasonal recipe. You don't need to measure the ingredients precisely or use a kitchen timer to track the cooking time. Instead, you can adjust the ingredients to your taste and cook the squash until it is as tender as you would like. I like to use soy sauce to season this dish because it delivers much needed salt and also lends an earthy flavor.

Mayonnaise is an easy way to add a creamy texture and tangy flavor without any effort. The mayonnaise will blend easily with the soy sauce and summer squash's liquid to emulsify into a smooth, creamy glaze that accentuates the freshness of the squash while still allowing its flavor to shine through.

Ingredients

- Olive Oil
- Summer squash cut into 1 inch cubes
- 1 Tablespoon butter
- 2 Tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 – 2 Tablespoons mayonnaise

Directions

Heat a large skillet over medium high heat. Add the olive oil and swirl to coat the bottom of the pan. Add the cubed summer squash and sauté until the squash begins to soften and release its liquid, stirring often to prevent the squash from sticking to the pan.

Continue to cook until the squash reaches your desired tenderness and most of the liquid has evaporated. Push the squash to the sides of the pan and place the butter and soy sauce in the middle. Allow the butter to melt and blend with the soy sauce. Gently stir the squash to coat with the soy sauce and butter.

Reduce the heat to low. Add the mayonnaise to the pan and stir until the glaze is smooth and creamy. Taste and adjust for seasoning. Remove from heat and serve warm, garnishing with a pinch of your favorite blend of spices if desired.

ROASTED HEIRLOOM TOMATO TART

serves 4 – 6 as a main course

This recipe was inspired by the Tomato-Ricotta Tart in Martha Stewart Living's FOOD. Over the years, we've made a few changes and this is the version we like best. I use scraps from the bottom of the pita chip bag for the crust, but good quality bread crumbs or panko would also be delicious. If you don't have a food scale handy for weighing the pita chips, use an appropriate amount to yield a generous two cups of crumbs.

Ingredients

- 180 grams pita chips or bread-crumbs
- 2 ounces (4 Tablespoons) olive oil
- 12 ounces ricotta cheese
- 1 ounce grated parmesan cheese
- 2 large eggs
- 2 Tablespoons chopped fresh basil
- 1 pound heirloom tomatoes
- Olive oil
- Sea salt
- Pepper

Directions

Preheat oven to 450 degrees Fahrenheit. Prepare a 9 inch springform pan by wrapping the bottom in aluminum foil. Set aside.

Place pita chips in the bowl of a food processor. Process until the chips have been transformed into fine

crumbs. Add olive oil and process until the mixture is evenly moist. Empty crumb mixture into the prepared springform pan and press evenly to cover the bottom of the pan.

Rinse out the bowl and blade from the food processor. Add ricotta cheese, eggs, and parmesan to the food processor and process until completely smooth. Add basil and pulse until basil is evenly distributed throughout the ricotta mixture.

Carefully add the ricotta mixture to the springform pan. Using a spatula, smooth the mixture over the crumb base to completely cover the pan. Take care not to disturb the crust mixture any more than necessary.

Slice heirloom tomatoes and place on top of the ricotta, overlapping where needed to fully cover the top. Brush the top of the tart with olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Place springform pan on a baking sheet and place in the preheated oven. Bake for 40 minutes or until the tomatoes are beginning to dry and the ricotta mixture has become firm and golden.

Remove from the oven and allow to cool ten minutes. Carefully run a thin metal spatula or paring knife around the outside edge of the tart to loosen it from the pan. Unmold the tart, cut into slices and serve warm.



BANANA BLUEBERRY CAKE

serves 10 – 12

I like to use my silicone Bundt pan when baking this recipe. I find that it helps the cake to remain moist as it bakes and cools. A metal Bundt pan or a standard cake pan could also be used. If using a different pan, simply adjust the cooking time as needed, removing the cake from the oven as soon as a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out cleanly.

Ingredients

- 3 ounces butter, melted
- 2 medium bananas (approximately 6 ounces), grated
- 1/2 cup (96 grams) sugar
- 1/2 cup (96 grams) brown sugar
- 2 Tablespoons vanilla extract
- 1 large egg
- 1 generous cup (5 ounces) fresh blueberries
- 2 ounces whole milk
- 1 Tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- 2 cups (120 grams) All-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit and prepare a Bundt pan by spraying lightly with pan spray or brushing with melted butter. Place the Bundt pan on a baking sheet and set aside as you prepare the batter.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the melted butter, grated bananas, sugar, brown sugar, vanilla, egg, and blueberries, stirring until combined. Add the milk and vinegar and mix until smooth. Add the flour, baking soda, and salt and stir just until combined.

Transfer the batter to the prepared Bundt pan. Place the cake in the middle of the oven and bake 50 to 60 minutes, adjusting baking time as needed if not using a Bundt pan. The cake is done when it has developed a light brown color and a toothpick inserted into the middle of the cake comes out clean.

Allow the cake to cool at least 10 minutes in the pan before inverting on a wire rack to cool completely. Serve warm or at room temperature.

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FALL GARDENING

REPORTING BY CHRIS MCLAUGHLIN

While Summer might be winding down, for many gardening aficionados, this is the beginning of one of the most exciting times of the year: Fall.

Fall means it's soon time to plant cool-weather crops in the warmer climes (although many of these crops will do just fine in the colder parts of the country).

Fall planting means fewer weeds, fewer insects and cooler temperatures to work the gardens into.

While the hottest part of the summer, August, may seem like the worst time to think about Fall planting, for the Southeastern parts of the United States, it is the perfect time to start.

Many gardeners will plant their cold-weather lovers in the Fall as opposed to the Spring.

They find they produce a better harvest, for longer.

Many gardeners don't use the valuable months of the fall. They "put their gardens to bed," not much longer after Labor Day.

At From Scratch, we find Fall gar-

dening to be the best as it is just so much easier to work.

And for the commercial growers who may be reading this, many producers stop planting before the Fall, which means less competition and better prices at the market.

If you haven't tried Fall gardening, this may be your year.

Many cool-season crops can go well beyond cool and into the freezing cold; and all the way through snowy winters.

Of course, then you'll need a little help from lots of mulch, your handy-dandy hoop house, and/or a cold frame.

By the way, there are several "cross-over" cool-season vegetables (e.g. carrots, beets, Swiss chard, cabbage, potatoes, and leafy greens) that can be harvested in the summer as long as they got a good start in the cool weather. On the following cool-weather vegetable list, you'll typically find that it's the leaves, stems, flower buds, and roots of these plants that we enjoy in the kitchen. The exceptions being fava (broad) beans and peas.

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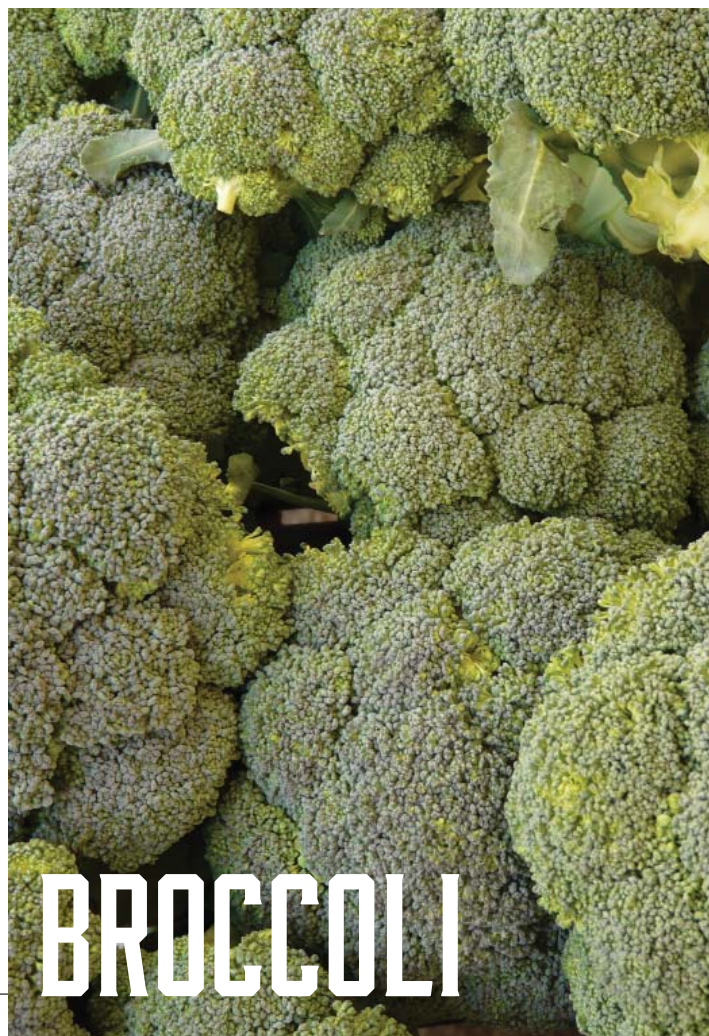
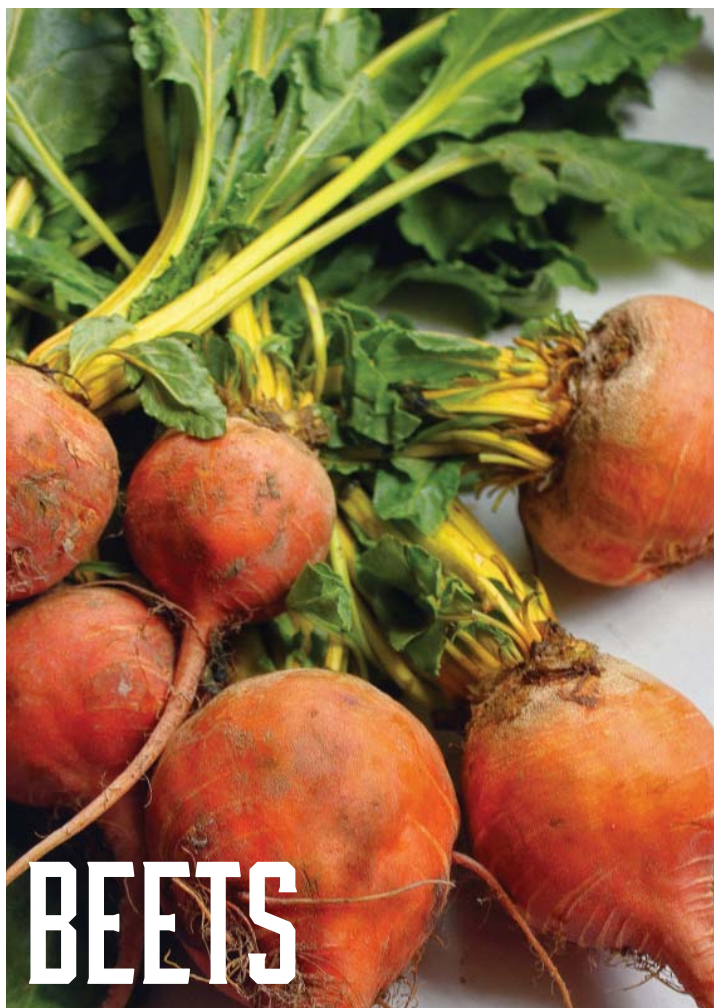
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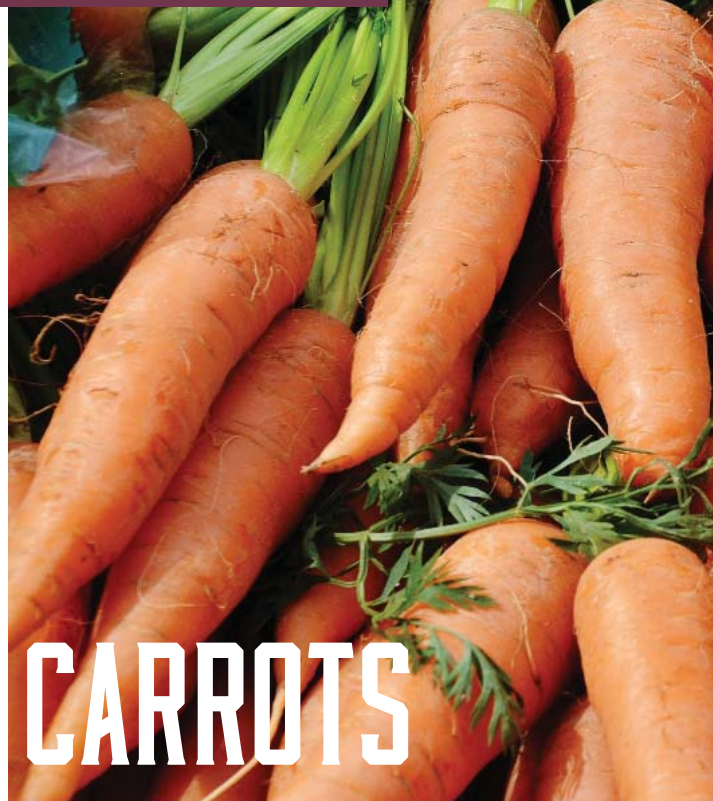
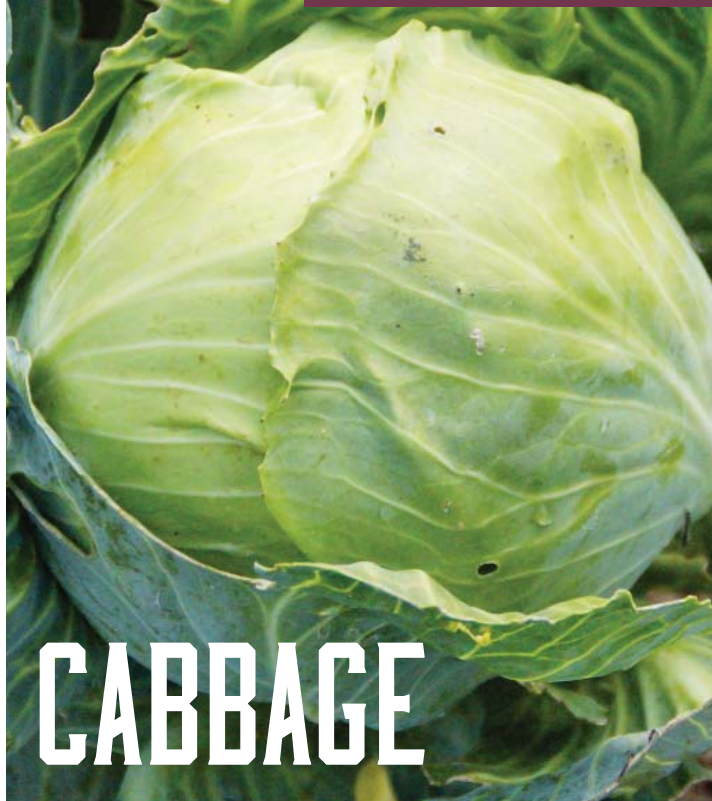
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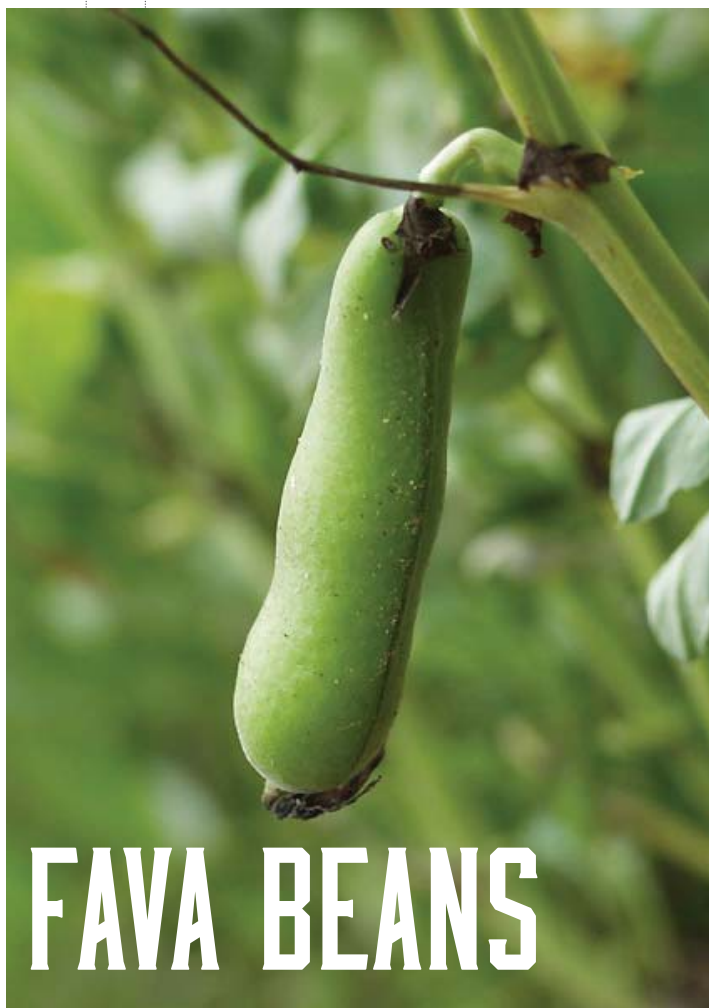
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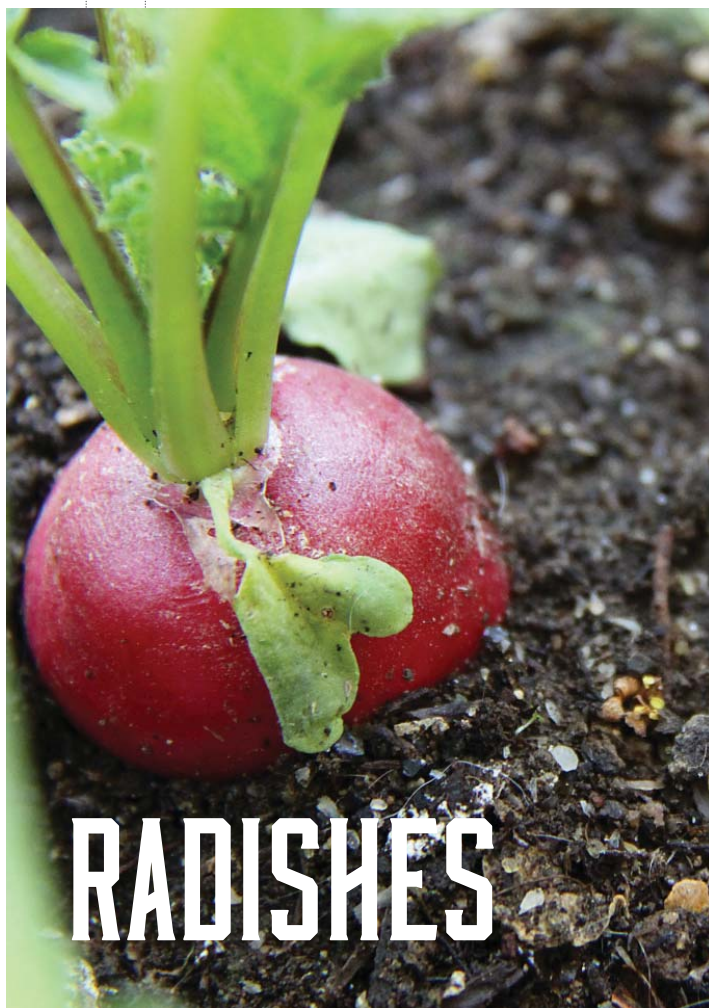
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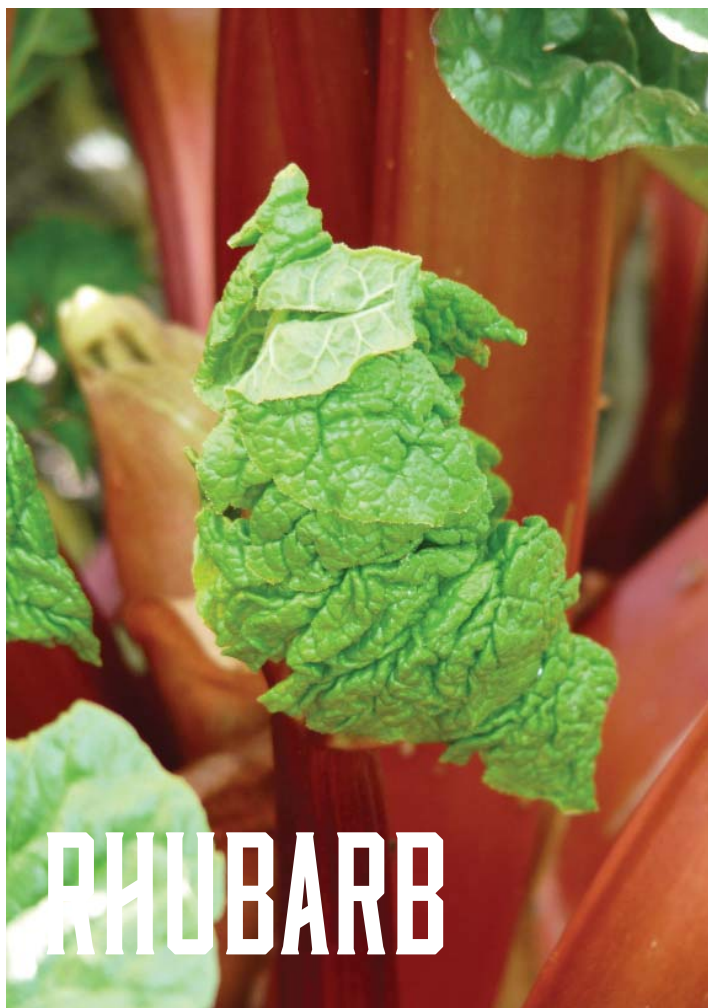
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“SEEDS”

BY SERES KYRIE



MOVING TO A NEW PLACE AND MAKING ROOTS IS NEVER EASY

“Where is it you live?” I’m repeatedly asked. This is not a loose, general question; folks are looking for street numbers, or even better, landmarks; best, the name of the previous owner. This used to strike me as forward, even nosy. Our house is the only “A-frame” on the river so everyone immediately locates us. It is one of those unique places that holds a book of old stories since its ‘38 construction: a teenage party in ‘86, someone’s honeymoon spot in ‘71, the site of a massive caught catfish in ‘98. I know the deed bears our name but round here, history is weightier and frankly, more possessive.

The first year we lived on the river, the Midwest experienced a terrible drought. Part of the reason we even purchased 10 acres in the country was because of the doom-ing reality of our climate-changing

future. We wanted to be at a place closer to the natural cycle of it all, where we could grow our own food. The word “sustainable,” echoes a dreamy, calling notion. Here though, the earth was cracked and the garden sprouts fought to puncture the crusty soil. The raspberry canes we’d lovingly thinned and transplanted from my grandfather’s farm 40 miles north held a whole lot of nostalgic potential. As the rain remained ceased by the third week however, we watched them helplessly wither. The water lines outside were cracked and, one more thing to do on the long list, I surrendered to only the spigot at the house. Like a madwoman, I transferred bucket loads of water to the parched plants in a wheelbarrow. But even the full-scale farmers couldn’t get their food to grow, calling in insurance bail-out. Yes, we moved to the heartland but now

we were just further from the grocery store. Our neighbors on all three sides are the same family — the Ericksons.

Somehow our property, abutted to a rock wall on a winding river, has been sold outside the family. It is unfarmable, for one, though GMO corn borders us in. Anne Erickson is one of nine offspring, still all living within the area. In a town of 800 people, I don't even try to do the math.

Slowly, I am starting to put together the relations: Vicki Erickson married into the Tollaksons, Sue Erickson married a Rossing, Gretchen, into the Johnsons. Our name, Kyrie, doesn't sound the least Germanic, or even Swiss. And Lutherans know not of Kyrie Elasion of the Catholic mass. The pronunciation is rarely butchered though, folks know of us before we even get a chance to meet them.

Proceeding a new garden, a rich pile of compost is nice. It had been years since anyone had inhabited our new home, years even prior since the inhabitants had had a garden. The endeavor was, as they say, all groundwork.

But oh, was I an enthusiastic composter! I made trips to a horse farm for loads of manure, I collected with rake the grass clipping behind my husband's riding mower. We even collected loads of the nutrient rich lake-weed from a nearby lake, back-wrenching work of

wet dense vegetation. And every time I emptied my kitchen bucket, I did it joyfully, pennies towards the investment of a lush garden.

Both my husband and I were raised in small towns. He had some of the same teachers in high school that his mom had had 25 years earlier. My parents lived 12 miles out of town and heated exclusively with wood off our property. So we both know how to talk the talk: deer hunting, skeeters, Packers. We know that the EMS fish fry benefit is a to-be-seen-at event, that when the youth football representative comes to the door selling fundraiser cookie dough its best to buy a few unwanted tubs. We ended up where we did because this location four hours south of our hometowns is vastly more temperate. Instead of snow 6 months out of the year, its 4. The garden zone promises the possibility of watermelons, perhaps even peaches. Our northwoods small town earns us a few credence points if we can drop it into conversation. Still, its not this town.

In October, I land a job at the town library. Its part-part time. The library is only open 20 hours a week anyway and the hours are split between a staff of 3 people. I work Saturdays which is busy. Its a strangely intimate job; one day I order a woman's requested "Dr. Phil "How to Reclaim Your Life" series. It turns out to be an Erickson's fiancée. The kids come on Saturdays and the library doubles as child

entertainment/care. I don't really mind, the kids are mostly self-entertained, choosing dvds and playing computer games, their bikes unlocked in a heap outside on the lawn. The library is housed in the community building along with the town office and police department. Now both the town secretary and day-cop know me by first name. Check, check.

I just don't feel very useful to folks round here. Country life runs a bit on the bartering system: beef for pork, haying a field for use of pasture land. Still, we call upon our neighbors — we have to call upon our neighbors. A rainstorm washes deep gullies into our driveway and a neighbor's skid-steer is beckoned. Our dog runs off in a thunderstorm to be returned by a farmer who held him in his barn until the skies cleared. Our all-wheel drive Subaru slides into a snowbank and, spinning tires, I simply have no choice but to call the Ericksons for use of their 4-wheel drive truck and a tow.

By spring I've started building up the garden beds. The carpet I'd placed over the grass last fall has efficiently killed any green. I push wheelbarrow after wheelbarrow of composted soil to top it off. Maybe a little hasty but I've been stirring diligently and if I want a garden this year, I really have no choice but to be premature. The garlic planted last October pushes its head through the last frosts, a miraculous gift seemingly bestowed by Demeter. We all hope

for a better summer than last's. By mid-June the raspberry canes have not bounced back at all, putting to rest any hope I'd had that perhaps they'd return wick this season. But beyond the garden perimeter, and lining the entire half-mile driveway are the lushest bushes of black-cap berries I've ever seen. Every day the children and I dress in long shirts and heavy jeans to collect the juicy berries within the brambles. I make two dozen pints of jam plus fill the freezer in anticipation of purple winter pancakes.

As the fourth of July approaches, the transplanted broccoli and kale are doing well. The peas are abundant and the carrots are beginning to show foliage. I've planted half a dozen tomato varieties but in every bed, tomato plants shoot up. Volunteers, from last year's compost. My friend tells me she always culls such volunteers, preferring the pure heritage fruit. But I'm grateful for every food bearing plant and can't bring myself to abort them. Come August, I pick the tiny pear-shaped offerings in thanks.

I consciously give out the land-line phone number. Most older friends know our cell-phone number but its area code is from our previous residence and I've found that most neighbors won't pick up if they see it on their caller-ID. On the answering machine I find a message from a neighbor asking if I could possibly watch her three children for the afternoon. "Of course," I call back, thinking of all the in-town grandparents, aunties and uncles

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she could have called instead, feeling strangely honored. Later, the woman who we buy maple syrup from asks if she could borrow my sewing machine, hers is in the shop. We arrange a meet-up and I try to play cool the pleasure in my voice.

We have a farmers market in town the first weekend of each summer month. It is a meeting of local Amish veggies, Packer-themed dish towels and bluegrass music. One old man sells woodwork that I doubt he has raised prices of since 1970. We buy a birdhouse for \$2 from him, feeling slightly guilty. Our family sells our ceramic wares at prices that barely cover our expenses and yet to the small-town buyers feel are exorbitant. I chat with Bill, the man who we brought

the house from and sell a few mugs to a couple from the library's book group. A man in his young twenties peruses our booth, honestly interested in the construction method and firings. He asks me probing questions about our artistic influences and where we were educated. He wears fitted jeans and a t-shirt proclaiming a farm-aid concert in the early 2000. His hat is hemp fiber and peeking out from under his shirt I can spot a bird-tattoo. He picks up a bowl, looks at the price and comments how reasonably priced it is. I can't help myself. I still have a residual suspicion that perhaps its not polite but I'm bubbling with curiosity inside. "So," I ask, "do you live round here?"

Read more from Seres here.

GOATS

THE BEST KEPT SECRET ON THE HOMESTEAD

BY TESSA ZUNDEL

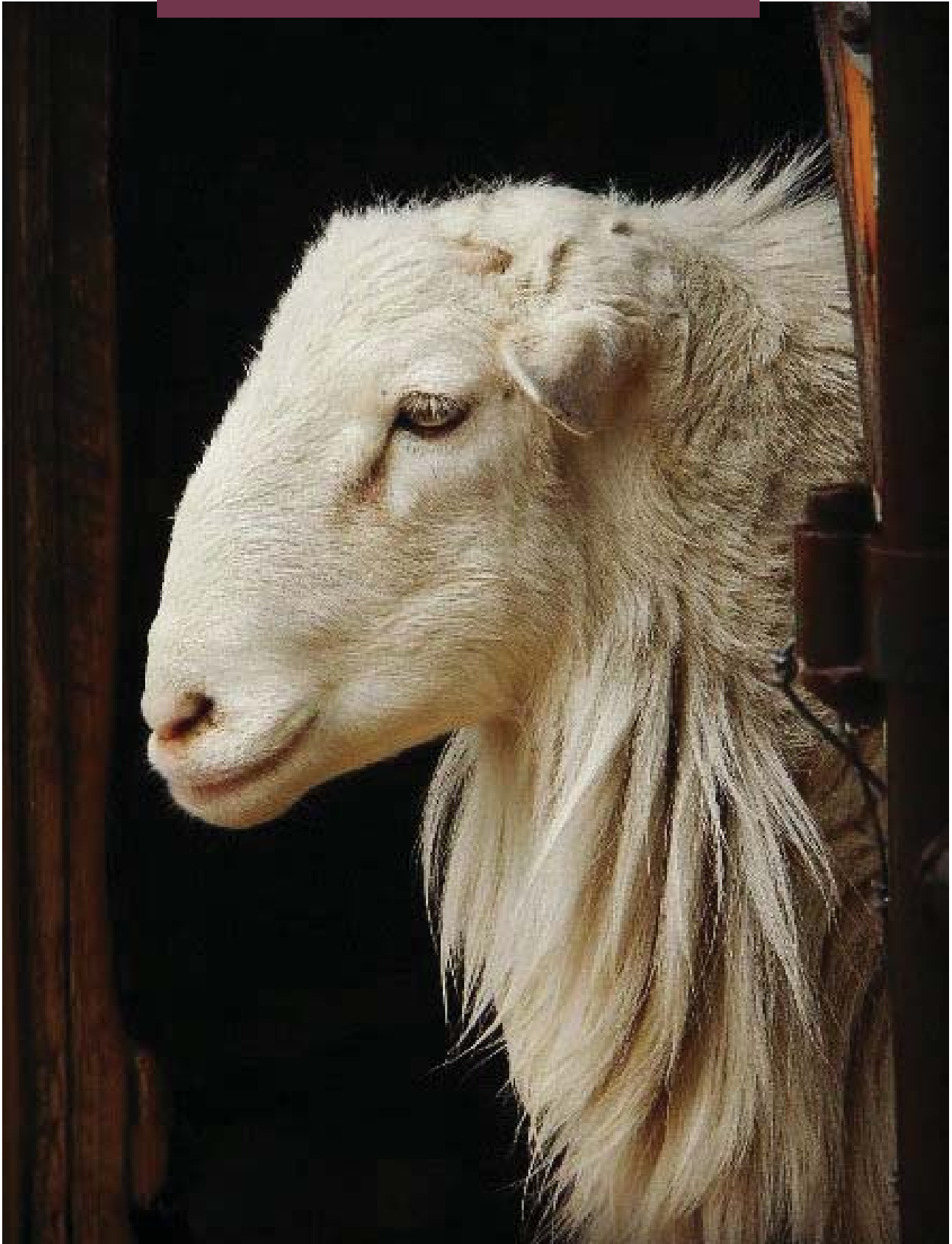
"Where are your goats," the lady asked me, indicating the open house brochure in her hand. "They're in this picture of the barns, but they're not out in the backyard."

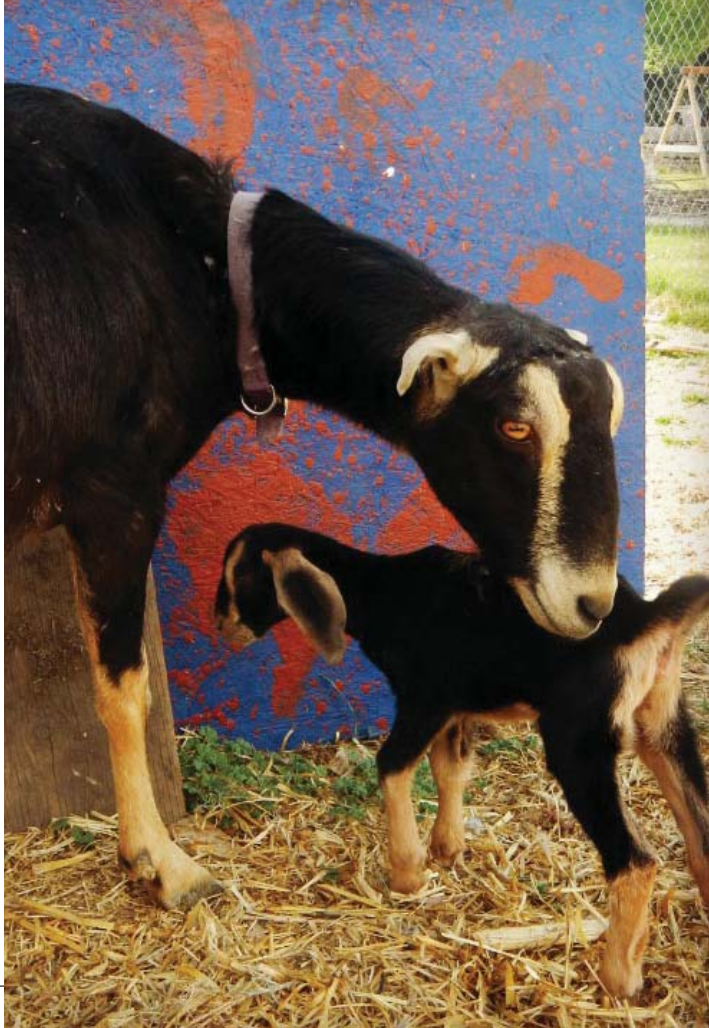
I forced a smile and said politely, "Well, we had to relocate them while we're selling the homestead. Not everyone remembers to close gates during showings and some people aren't as comfortable around livestock as others. We've sent them to live with good homesteading friends of ours and they're doing well."

"Oh," the lady said, stuffing the flyer in her purse and heading for the front door. "I think the backyard would look better if the goats were there."

So do I, honey, I thought to myself. So do I.

First of all, let's define what this article is not — a comprehensive treatise on goat breeds, kidding schedules and everything you'll ever need to know about homestead goats. You and I just don't have the time to cover that. This





is an article written to explain a few basics and to convey the deep love of goats that developed in this city kid who was dragged, kicking and screaming, into goat husbandry. Truth is, I'm not even much of an animal person and I certainly didn't think it would be goats that would capture my heart. I mean, come on, its in the Bible that the sheep are on His right hand and the GOATS are on His left. That's got to tell you something right there. And yet, here I am, a bereft and pathetic goat mamma, living without and mourning the loss of my goats as we sell our homestead to move on to the next one out of state. Who knew I would actually weep the first time I opened the back door and didn't hear their plaintive "Maaaaaa" — which always translated into, no matter how many piles of weeds and herbs they'd just pigged out on, "Feed us, you big meanie! Can't you see we're wasting away?!"

I miss their constant head butting and goofing around. I miss my head dam, who kept everyone, including me, in line and in order. She and I had an understanding and no matter how many times she stepped on my foot or walked across my path or bit me when I fed her that herbal wormer, I knew she loved me. We'd been through so many different breeds of dairy goat as we built our small herd, looking for the ones that would suit us best and I always, always, came back to my Maizie (incidentally a LaMancha/Nubian mix). She and I were both pregnant at the same time one year and we'd often commiserate together. Still, having

them move on was a matter of practicality and I knew the goats would be happy in their new home. No one was more surprised than I was that I would experience such a real sense of loss when the goats were gone. So, it is with a very personal connection, that I share with you a bit about why you may end up discovering that goats are the best kept secret on the homestead — and in your heart.

Unless you're a vegan, you hit this place in your quest for self sufficiency where you run up against protein. Dairy and meat. A light bulb goes off in your head and you realize that you'll never be truly independent until you have a backyard source for protein. Homesteading has so many faces in our modern culture and many, many of us homestead in small spaces — even apartments! There's no grade on our homesteading ventures because each of us, no matter what our situation, is slowly working on making the world a better place just by looking to take care of ourselves and our fellow man, one vegetable and herb at a time. I realize that not all of us are blessed with enough space to produce our own protein sources but for those who are, the question then becomes, "How on earth am I going to do it? Where do I even begin?!"

If you are ready for homestead meat production (and you've done the chicken/rabbit thing — seriously start with those, you'll thank me later), then may I suggest goats? Or, if you're in place where milk will suit your needs for now, may I also sug-

gest dairy goats? Its natural that the first thing you ask yourself about goats is, do I want a dairy goat or a meat goat? With the Boer-types, you have both so you'll need to decide where you want your focus to be. If you're new to animals (a chicken doesn't count — they're really just like food producing pets), then I suggest you pick one thing to focus on at first. You do NOT want to overwhelm yourself. If you'd like to raise a meat herd, decide how many you can raise on your land, how you will acquire them and who will do the butchering. If you decide you'd like to start with a dairy herd, then a good place to start is to decide what breed and size you will need. (Incidentally, you can eat dairy goats in the same way that you can eat a Leghorn chicken — they're edible, just not bred for munching.)

There are scores of books and websites devoted to the various breeds of goat that roam the earth. You've probably already read some of them and the information is starting to backlog to the point that whole chapters of Storey publications are leaking out your ears. Am I right?

There are several associations for Nigerian Dwarf goats alone, extolling the virtues of those midgets with their smaller living equaling smaller needs; they produce less milk than a standard sized goat but they also live and eat smaller. You'll find breeders offering crosses between Nigerian Dwarves and Standard sized goats; these crosses are called minis and are worth a look, believe me. The minis can produce nearly as much

milk as a standard sized goat but still live and eat smaller. There are multiple categories at reputed stock shows for the ever popular standard sized breeds who are famous for their production, butterfat content and beauty. You'll find local farmers and breeders who can run on for days about the amazing Boer goat, with their virile health, strong mothering instincts and their relatively docile nature. I know several people in my state who are breeding their Boers with their dairy goats to get the best of both worlds. Now before you Kiko growers jump all over me for not mentioning your favorite meat breed, let me make it clear that there are A LOT of noble, useful breeds of goat and you will absolutely find one or more that do exactly what you need them to do. There's no dearth of information out there.

I'll include a list of my favorite resources at the end of the article for those just starting to contemplate this goat adventure, but the odds are, you know more than you think you do — at least, about your needs. I'm willing to bet you have already thought about and may be able to answer some of these basic questions: How much milk do I need for my family? Can I get anyone in my house to eat a roast if I tell them its chevon? How many times a day can I realistically expect to milk a goat? What are goats like really? Do I have the right kind of fencing to keep them out of my roses? How do I get them to make baby goats when its time? What do I do if I have extra?

I know some of what's going on in your mind because I've been right where you are now and have asked all the same questions. Even after some years experience under my belt, I still begin each winter thinking, "How many times a day can I realistically expect to milk goats?" And, fyi, you don't have to milk through the winter if you don't want to; I do it so that I still have milk but don't have to breed my goats every year. I rotate my milkers through three cycles of being pregnant, in milk and resting. I've got five children of my own and I know what its like – no way am I going to have any animal of mine pregnant every year of its life. I don't quibble with people who make a different choice; that's just what we've chosen to do with our animals and so we milk through the winter and all year long, for a few years with each dam.

This might be a good time to point out – they're your goats. You can do what you think is best for their care. Read every book you think has value. Go to websites and learn what you can. Ultimately, though, these animals are under your stewardship and don't let anyone tell you there's only one right way to do anything.

All I want to do is share with you why I love, truly love, my goats and some of the reasons why we decided to start with them as we began our homesteading adventures. To aid me in this effort, I have enlisted the help of two dairy goat experts, Mr. Ivan and Miss Liah. Ivan and Liah happen to be two homestead children and when I found myself at a loss as to how to convey the essence of all things goat for the purposes of this article, they were kind enough to give me some advice born from their experiences on their own



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homesteads, with their own goats.

I posed some questions to our young mentors on the whys and how's of their goat herds and I'm hopeful that their answers (and my commentary) will be helpful to you.

I asked our friends:

WHAT BREEDS OF GOAT HAVE YOU RAISED SO FAR? WHICH WAS YOUR FAVORITE AND WHY?

IVAN: I have raised Nubians and La-Manchas. My favorite breed so far has been the LaMancha — very intelligent and loving animals.

LEAH: We have raised Nigerians and various breeds of miniature goats. We were given some full sized goats — Nubian/LaMancha mixes. I think that my favorite goats are Nigerians because they are so cute and spunky. My second favorite is the Minis because they are so floppy and will stay with you all day.

HOMESTEAD LADY BUTTS IN: LaManchas are typically very sweet but here is where its good to remember that goats are individuals. We had a top of the line LaMancha that was pure evil. In fact, we nicknamed her "Evil Murdoch". (Ever read the children's classic by Alice Provinsen, *Our Animal Friends at Maple Hill Farm*? If you have, you're laughing right now and totally get what I'm saying.) Bottom line, be prepared for anything as far as goat personalities go!

WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR YOUR CURRENT HERD? IF YOU'RE RAISING ONLY DAIRY GOATS NOW, MIGHT YOU DO MEAT GOATS IN THE FUTURE?

IVAN- We recently moved from our off-grid farm, and sold our goats. It was a very sad day, but we do plan on getting some again soon, and I would definitely do meat goats in the future.

LIAH - We have nine goats right now. We had 11 babies; nine of them were Nigerians and two of them were minis (Nigerian/Nubian/Lamancha crosses). As far as meat goats are concerned, no. Now that I have had dairy goats and have loved on them, I wouldn't be able to eat one, even if it was a different goat.

HOMESTEAD LADY - I feel ya, Ivan, my friend. Liah brings up an important point. You're homesteading, death will be part of the picture no matter how it comes and its good to have everyone's input on how the homestead is run and be sensitive to your family members' natural tendencies and desires. Ultimately, you have to do what's best for the animal and the homestead but have some good conversations now with your family and talk to other homesteaders to see what they do. This will apply as the animal ages out of its "usefulness", too.

WHY DID YOU PICK GOATS

AND NOT A COW?

IVAN- A goat was financially a better choice for our family to start out with. Plus our neighbors had goats and helped us [begin] and we really learned a lot from them.

LIAH - Goats are easier to handle, they eat less, and they take up less room.

HOMESTEAD LADY - All good points and I'll add one more. There's less work involved to get the does hooked up with a buck when you need to make baby goats. Goats are easier to transport and so date night isn't such a hassle. Know what I'm sayin'?

I don't want to use our time together here to extol the virtues of goats while bashing on the humble homestead cow. I love cows and I always will. And goats have plenty of faults. However, size really was a large (no pun intended) part of why we went with goats when we were newbie homesteaders. We have five children and I wanted all of us to learn about dairying from an animal that wouldn't be so far out of our weight class. We're ready for a cow now, but we sure weren't back then.

Liah pipes back in when asked how they find a buck to cover their does, "My mom usually asks her homesteading friends and we find one. This is the first year that we are going to keep a buck and we will see how it goes."

If you have the space for a buck, controlling your herd genetics and not having to take your does from place to place is a big plus. Local,

online classifieds have been a big help to us when we didn't have our own buck because we could talk face to face with people in our community and visit their land to make sure that the biosecurity issues that are important to us were important to them as well.

WHAT YOUR TOP FIVE FAVORITE THINGS ABOUT GOATS?

IVAN - I love to milk goats, it's relaxing and enjoyable. They're so easy to handle. They are such loving animals! They really are cost efficient. My goat, Clara, ate very little and loved treats I gleaned off our land. And did I mention how entertaining they can be?

LEAH - They are so sweet and cute. It is fun to watch them play. They bring you joy. They give you undivided attention. They love you no matter what.

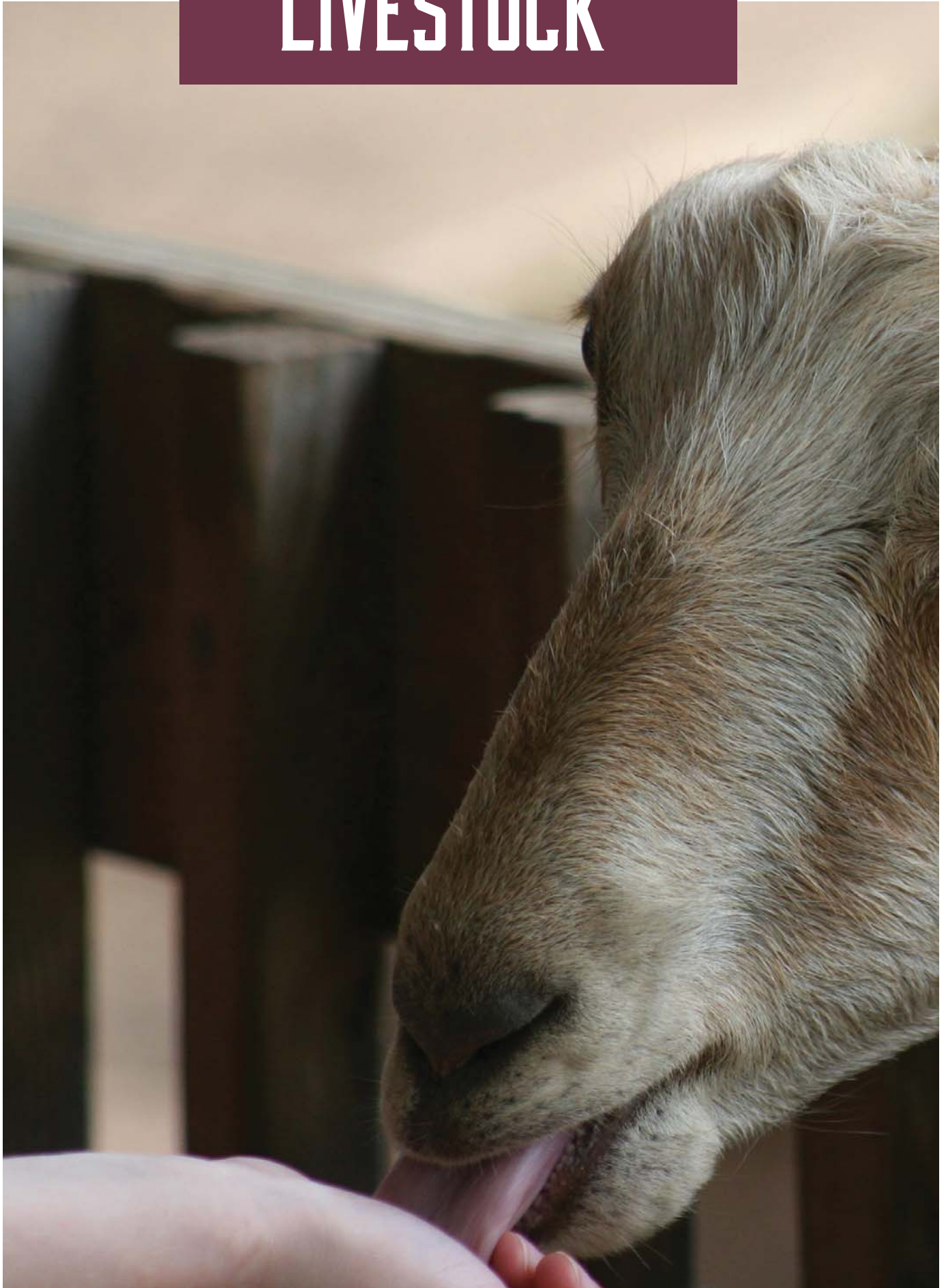
HOMESTEAD LADY - Goats are great foragers and their feed to milk conversion is super! They also have been known to eat the paint off the barn and kick over milk buckets but life is give and take, man.

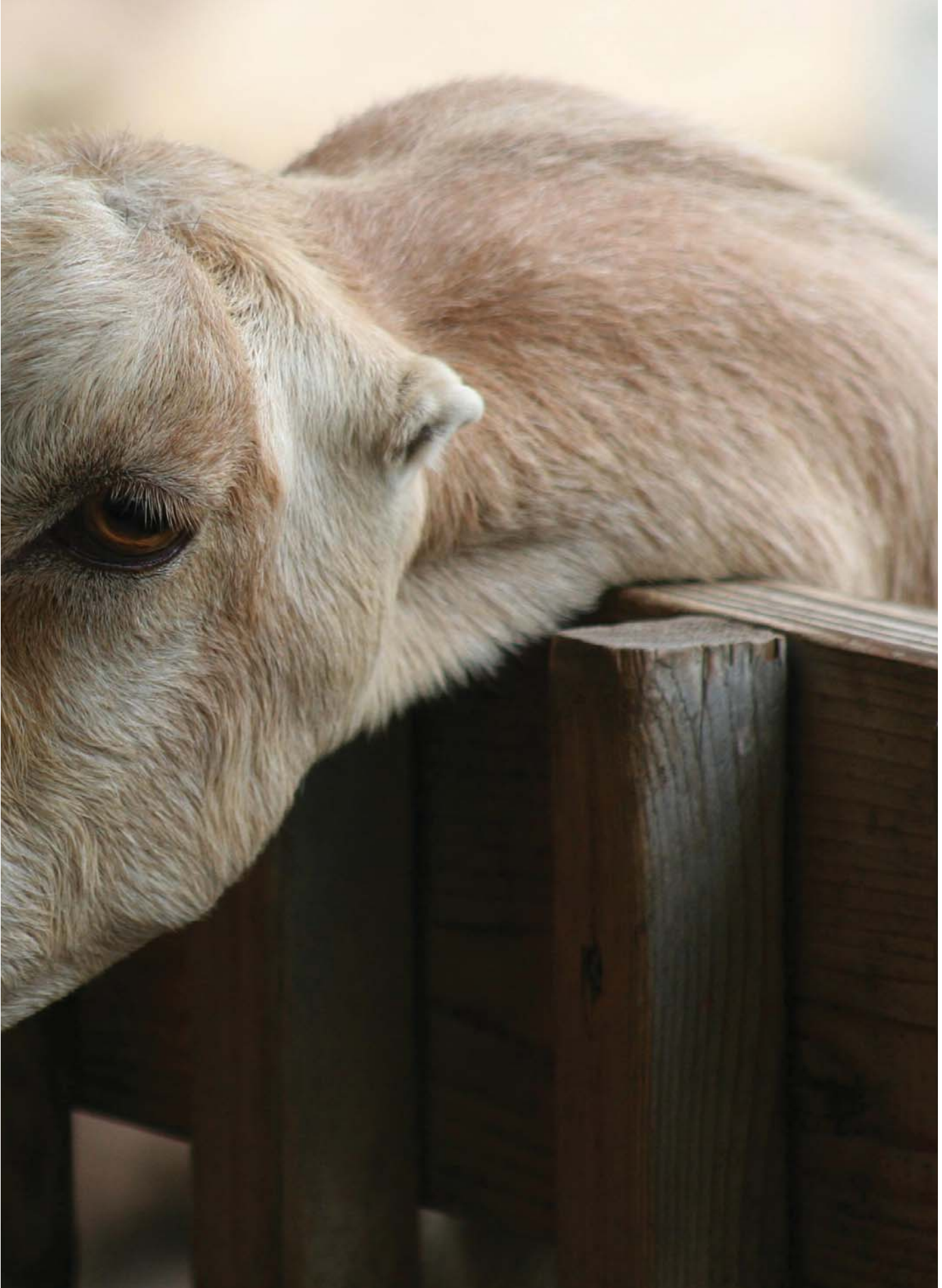
WHAT ARE YOUR TOP LEAST FAVORITE THING ABOUT GOATS?

IVAN - Well, they do need good fencing to keep them where they are suppose to be.

LIAH - They are super stubborn and pushy.

LIVESTOCK





HOMESTEAD LADY – Bwahaha! I love Ivan's very diplomatic answer to that one. Liah tells it like it is, too. My head dam was awesomeness itself - like Mary Poppins, practically perfect in every way. Except... she'd herd me with her head up my booty if I wasn't moving fast enough with the treats. She'd step on my feet when she was cranky. She'd nip and butt other, inferior goats. She tore open my apron pockets looking for sunflower seeds. She'd sit down on my clippers if she got bored while I trimmed her hooves. AND she refused to take her sweet tasting, immune boosting herbs. No amount of hiding them in honey and molasses or shoving them down her throat would induce her to swallow her herbal wormer. After a year, I gave up and tossed her dose in with her rose hips and sunflower seeds at milking time and prayed she got at least some of them. The point was, after all, that she won and I lost. Match to the goat.

WHAT DO YOU FEED YOUR DAIRY HERD?

LIAH – We are feeding them alfalfa every day and the goats that we are milking we give grain. They get most of our kitchen scraps (vegetables and fruit). Someday we would like to do fodder, sprouts and pasture grass. (Liah lives on an acre, semi-urban homestead without pasture on site, though they do have some pasture land around them.)

HOMESTEAD LADY – Grain is an obvi-

ous but controversial choice and many people are choosing to provide pasture, fodder or sprouted grains for their animals — meat and dairy goats alike. As I said, goats are fantastic foragers and will find a good deal of their food if you have space for that or will happily munch up all your edible weeds and herbs. And your prize roses, so I refer you to Ivan's comment about fencing. We allow weeds to grow up on our homestead so that we can supplement our goats' rations; weeds like lamb's quarter, mallow, amaranth, purslane and other herbs.

HOW MANY DAIRY GOATS AND WHICH BREEDS WOULD BE YOUR IDEAL NUMBER?

LIAH – Probably two full size, three minis, and either three or four Nigerians.

HOMESTEAD LADY – This is totally based on your personal needs, your space, any zoning laws and how goofy you get over baby goats that you simply must keep. Do know that goats like to have friends and unless you have a similar sized animal on your property, you will most likely need at least two goats to begin with so one doesn't get lonely and cry all day. Please believe me, all day.

WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR YOUR CURRENT HERD?

LIAH – My mom wants to specialize in breeding Minis and I want to breed

and specialize in Nigerians. Older goats that aren't being milked anymore will probably become pets.

Homestead Lady — Again, decide ahead of time what your program will be for older milkers or studs who no longer can do their duty. Meat goats are processed out before they age too much, unless they're being kept as breeders. If you figure out a program for your aging animals, there will be less crisis and more calmness when the time comes to do whatever it is you've decided to do. You can send your older (healthy) animals to auction, harvest them for stewing meat yourself or devote some of your space to their permanent housing, if they're going to be pets. Only you can decide what's right for you, your family and your animals.

DO YOU USE YOUR GOATS AS A SOURCE OF INCOME IN ANY WAY? IF SO, HOW?

IVAN— We didn't use them for income, however it really saved my parents money on milk and dairy products.

LIAH — Yes, we sell milk to some our homesteading friends and when we have babies, we sell most of them. This year we sold nine baby goats just by word of mouth.

HOMESTEAD LADY — There are savings built into having your own goats but not all of them are simple to quantify. You pay for some kind of feed (purchased grain, the water to grow pasture and browse), various health needs (blood tests, wormers, etc)

and equipment to milk/harvest or a fee to the butcher – or both!

However, you save resources as well, by having this protein source on your homestead. First of all, you're not relying on a tenuous commercial food system to provide you with protein. No trucking strike is going to interrupt your supply of milk and meat, unless your feed isn't local. Oil can do what its gonna do, you're busy with your goats.

On the homestead, the benefits of having goats around are plentiful. To start with, goats are wonderful weeders and composters – their dung is absolute gold in the garden! They produce wholesome milk and meat, which can be turned into so many different products to sustain and nourish your family. They provide companionship and love, which is of value, too.

*

So, are those questions you've asked yourself as you've thought about homestead goats? I know there are others, but that's a good start, I think. The other stuff you'll work out with a little time and experience. Don't fret if you discover that goats aren't for you; just pass them along to good people and go try something else. No harm, no foul. But I do encourage you to give them a try if cows seem a bit intimidating and a water buffalo is hard to source locally. (Did you know you could milk a water buffalo? I wonder if the water buffalo knows that.)

There's one last thing I wanted the children to share with me that I thought might be helpful to you. (By the way, you have no idea how

hard its been to not use the word “kids” when I’m talking about Ivan and Liah. I didn’t want you to confuse them with baby goats, after all.) I asked our young friends if they would share a quick synopsis of their homestead day so you can get an idea of how the whole animal-bigger-than-a-chicken-thing might look on your homestead. Really, the chores become your normal but its good to make sure that you know what’s coming. This will make it easier to delegate responsibilities throughout the whole family. Even small children can help bring treats and weeds down to the goat pen, pull a wagon full of water buckets and brush out a goat’s coat (with supervision). If its just you on the homestead, odds are you only need a small number of goats anyway and so you can keep the herd at a manageable level.

IVAN SAYS OF HIS DAY - When I was living on our off-grid farm, I would wake up and milk around 7:00 in the morning. I would then feed the goats, horse, chickens and ducks. I would fill up the wood box in the house, and usually start a fire. Mom would be making breakfast, and getting the kids ready for school. Next comes school for the rest of the day, and then playing around with the animals. I loved riding my horse. Evenings I would milk again and finish up chores. My brother and sisters have their own chores, too.

LIAH DESCRIBES HER TYPICAL DAY - We usually get out at 8:00 or 8:30 to do animal chores. My sister takes care of feeding and watering all the

animals. Me and my mom milk all the goats; the night before we put away baby goats so that the moms will have lots of milk in the morning. I milk the Nigerians and my mom milks the full sized goats. Then we go inside and put the milk in the freezer. Then we take care of house chores and go on to study (home-school). See? No biggie.

Except on days when it is. Just say-in’.

Heather, a homestead blogging buddy of mine from Green Eggs and Goats, once quipped that you might be a homesteader if you’ve rolled under a fence chasing a goat less than three minutes after exiting the shower. Uh, yeah, done that. But I’ve also laid with my laboring goat as she birthed the most adorable little babies to ever walk this earth. I’ve administered to my injured ones when various mishaps occur. My children have skipped and jumped and played with our herd until they all dissolved into a puddle of giggles. The goats have increased our family’s health while providing companionship and love. And some head butts to the rear. So many times, it has been the needs of my goats that have pulled me back out and onto the land on days when I was feeling too tired to bother. The connection to them has strengthened my connection to my land and I helped me feel my place in the cycle of how things should be.

Can I calculate that kind of thing effectively? Probably not; math isn’t my thing. Homesteading is my thing and I can tell you honestly, I will probably never homestead without

goats because they're part of what defines that word for me. That lady with the brochure in her hand had it right – this homestead just isn't what it could be without the goats. Even so, as I'm missing them terribly, their echo sustains me. I leave my love with the herd I built here while I make plans to build a new one as we start the homesteading cycle over again on this next adventure. Will your next adventure let you in on the secret of homestead goats?

MORE ABOUT IVAN – My name is Ivan; I'm thirteen years old. I love homesteading and animals. I like soccer, horses, technic legos, and cooking. My dream is to be an organic meat farmer and a butcher. I camped for six months with my family while we built our home. After five years of living off-grid, we recently moved to a rural town closer to my dad's

job. They are saving to buy a bigger piece of land. I miss our farm, but I'm learning to urban farm for now. More about our family's story at: <http://www.forgottenwayfarms.com/>

MORE ABOUT LIAH – Liah is an eleven year old who loves to write stories and all things horses. She wants to be a mom and also a vet, have a homestead where she trains and raises horses, live off of what she raises for food, and have goats, chickens, ducks, turkeys, bunnies, and maybe something more exotic. She just started a brand new blog about animals that her mom helped her start where she will soon be posting animal stories from her homestead. <http://liahsanimaladventures.blogspot.com/>

Read more from Tessa Zundel here.



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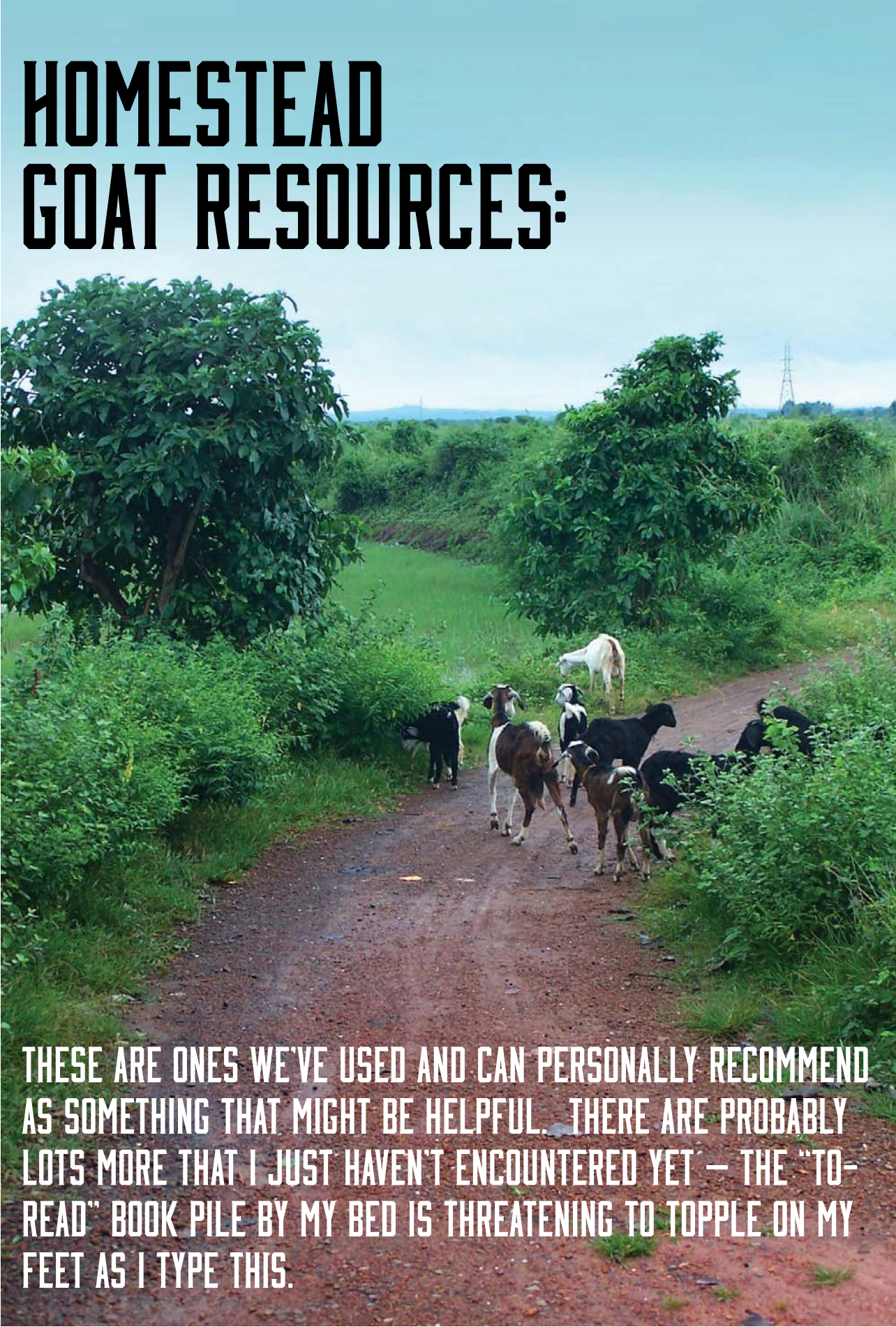
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HOMESTEAD GOAT RESOURCES:

A group of goats, including several adults and a few kids, are walking away from the camera on a reddish-brown dirt path. The path is flanked by dense green bushes and trees. In the background, a power line tower is visible against a clear blue sky. The overall scene is a rural, homestead-like environment.

THESE ARE ONES WE'VE USED AND CAN PERSONALLY RECOMMEND AS SOMETHING THAT MIGHT BE HELPFUL. THERE ARE PROBABLY LOTS MORE THAT I JUST HAVEN'T ENCOUNTERED YET — THE "TO-READ" BOOK PILE BY MY BED IS THREATENING TO TOPPLE ON MY FEET AS I TYPE THIS.

BOOKS:

Natural Goat Care by Pat Coleby
– Comprehensive and information
– natural/holistic methods.

Raising Goats Naturally by Deborah Niemann – The meat grower might like a little more information but, otherwise, this is a nice read with good information.

Storey's Guide to Raising Dairy Goats by Jerry Belanger – The low down in goat husbandry. Conventional health and breeding methods.

The Meat Goat Handbook by Yvonne Zweede-Tucker – Just what it says and a good time is had by all.

The Backyard Goat by Sue Weaver – Will teach you the basics you need to know about fiber, milk, meat and even pack goats. Fun stuff for kids like teaching goats to pull a cart and do tricks. I laughed out loud but you'll need a more in depth resource, too.

The Comprehensive Photographic Guide to Humane Slaughtering and Butchering by Adam Danforth – Full disclosure here – This one I haven't read yet but its winging its way to me right now and I wanted to mention it because it came SO highly recommend to me. I was saying that I needed information on harvesting several kinds of animals in one book and that I needed lots of pictures because I'm such a visual learner. Boom, Baby! This book was the one that everyone said to read. So, there you go.

Anything Gail Damerow has written on any animal will most likely be helpful to you. She's like the female Dr. Doolittle.

Mary Jane Toth has a few cook-books specifically for goat products and they're all worth looking at if you can find them – she covers cheese, desserts and even soap! Don't even get me started on soap books but, yes, you can make beautiful soaps and beauty items with goats milk.

ONLINE:

<http://fiascofarm.com/> – Not fancy but the absolute best goat website I've been on. I'm constantly there! Anything you need to know, Molly will have an answer. Plus, she has a shop that sells herbal products for livestock and that's where I buy my herbal wormer.

As a blogger, I'm biased, but I love the personal experiences shared on blogs – <http://www.greeneggsandgoats.com/goats>, <http://timbercreekfarmer.com/>, <http://www.betterhensandgardens.com/category/goat-2/>

If you're interested in registering, showing and/or breeding joining an association is a must:

The American Goat Society – <http://www.americangoatsociety.com/>

The American Dairy Goat Association – <http://www.adga.org/>

The American Boer Goat Association – <http://abga.org/>

The Nigerian Dwarf Goat Association – <http://www.ndga.org/>

The Miniature Dairy Goat Association – <http://miniaturedairygoats.com/>

You get the idea – I could literally go on pasting links forever! Whatever your breed or purpose, there's an association for that.



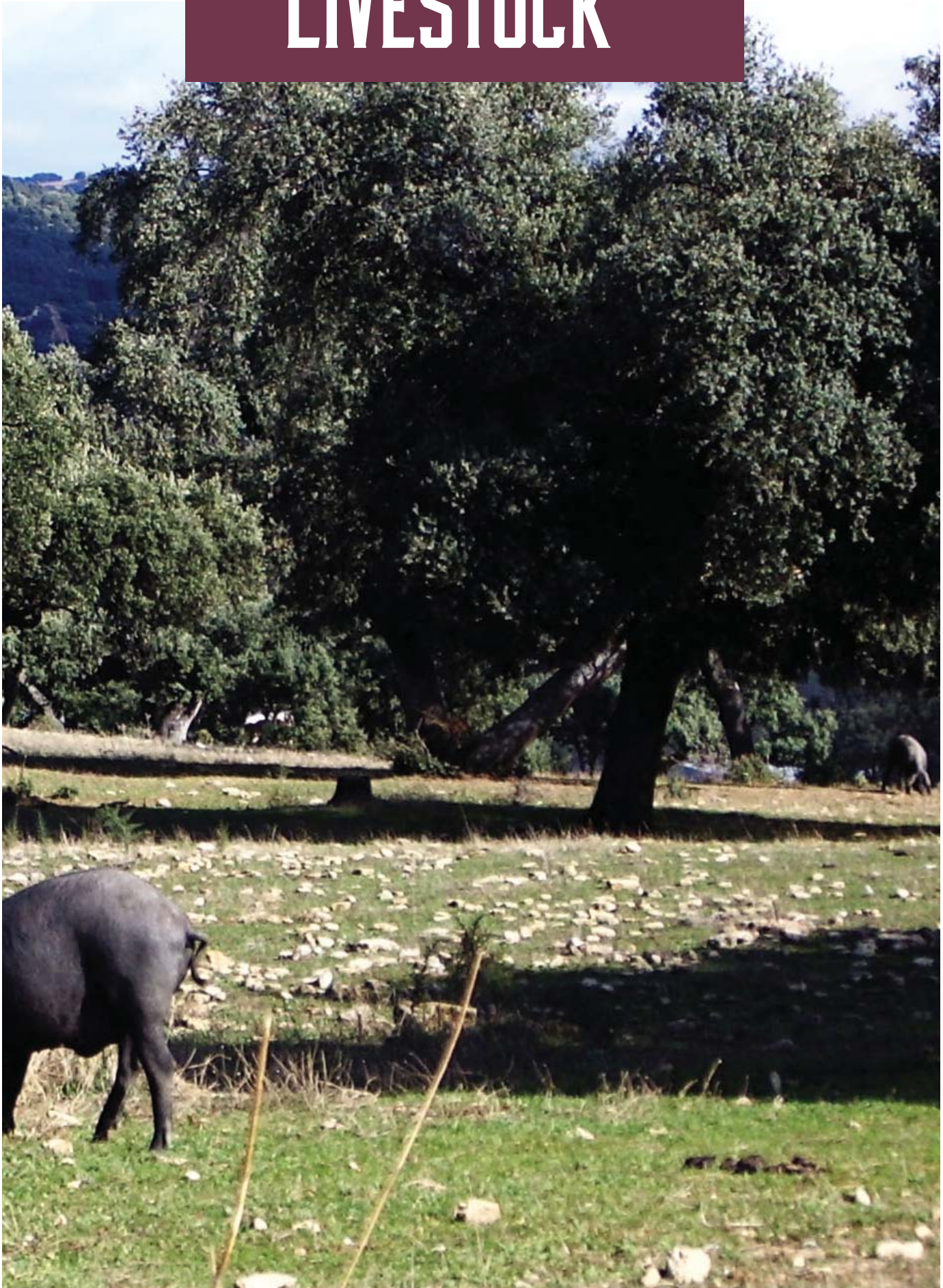
FIRST PIG HARVEST

BY JANYA VERANTH

I DON'T KNOW IF IT WAS A POP! OR A BANG! OR A CRACK!, BUT THE SOUND OF THE FIRST GUNSHOT UNCORKED A TORRENT OF EMOTION IN ME. IN THE TIME IT TOOK ME TO WALK FROM THE OLD BARN TO THE NEW BARN, CRYING AND GASPING FOR AIR THE WHOLE WAY, THEY WENT DOWN LIKE DOMINOES.
ONE...TWO...THREE...FOUR ..

LIVESTOCK

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Each bullet taking the life of our pigs. Today was the first pig harvest and, although we've seen it coming for a while, you can never fully prepare yourself for the first time. The morning was somber and we waited to feed them their final meal until it was almost time for the mobile slaughter unit to arrive. The pigs were happily eating breakfast when the beefy refrigerated box truck rolled up. The driver, a bald man with a stout belly and a kind smile, exited the truck with a .22 Magnum in his hands.

Holy crap. This is getting real.

His partner got out of the truck and shook my hand while putting on a pair of waterproof coveralls stained with blood around the cuffs. While my husband and I asked novice questions, they both put on tool belts dangling with chains and very sharp tools. The boss looked to me: We're going to butcher them right here in the driveway if that's ok with you.

Yes, of course, we told them, whatever you need to do.

With eleven more animals to dispatch after our pigs, the slaughter team didn't have a ton of time for small talk. My husband led them to the entrance of the pen while I put my hands through the fence to give them one more back rub, one more goodbye.

I shuffled away as he cocked the rifle, head hung with the heaviness of ending a life. This is the way of it, I thought. This is how bacon comes to be bacon, there is no other way. But still. It hurts to love a creature so much and also make the call for its ultimate demise. This

is how we feed our family, friends, and customers. But this is also the middle ground of farm-to-table that people fail to discuss. We call it 'the harvest' to tame its reality, but this is the kill; all blood, guts, and bone splayed out at our feet. Farm-to-table is charming until you have blood on your hands.

I did not watch the kill, but my husband did. It was important to us to know for certain that their final moments were without struggle. A panicked pig can be like a freight train off the tracks so we hired a slaughter team known for their swiftness and accuracy. Each pig was shot in the head and dropped instantly. By the time the fourth one sensed the end of the first one, she had already peacefully submitted and was quickly dispatched.

When I returned to the old barn, each pig had been hoisted out of the pen by a crane and laid out in a row. I approached gingerly, slowly digesting the scene before me; pools of blood by the feeder where they ate breakfast just 20 minutes earlier; the cracking of bone as the hooves were removed from the legs; and the matter-of-fact face of the butcher as he sharpened his cleaver. It was a lot to take in.

Over the next 45 minutes the pigs transformed from Beulah, Bitsy, Ally, and Abby into carcasses without hides, heads, or any of the recognizable features that made these pigs so unique. The gray and purple guts tumbled out effortlessly as each pig was unzipped. Their tiny brains fell out of their heads and we studied the thickness of their skulls. Their skins were ripped off



their backs with the sound of Velcro and thrown into a barrel. An electric saw was drawn through each pig splitting her perfectly in half. Sharp steel hooks were threaded through each carcass while the crew boss hosed off the blood and collagen that welled up in the cracks of the gravel driveway. There they hung, all four of them, next to a cow that had been quartered just a few hours before. The doors of the box truck slammed as we thanked the crew for their swift and respectful service and they drove away to do it eleven more times.

People ask how we can do this.

It is the way of things.

Isn't it so hard?

Absolutely.

But the pigs pay the ultimate sacrifice by giving us their lives and we bear witness to that sacrifice to humble ourselves before the circle of life. We know that all the love,

care, and nourishment we gave them will come back to us when they come to our table to feed our friends and our family; to celebrate a holiday or a Sunday morning breakfast.

We will continue to raise pigs and have them humanely slaughtered on the farm. We will pay the emotional debt that comes with this line of work. If it ever stops stinging, if I stop feeling the weight of our animals' sacrifice, then it's time to quit. This may not be what I signed up for, but it is part of what it takes to be a strong and conscientious farmer.

And that's what I came here to do.

Janya lives on Redfeather Farm in Washington. Janya and her family raises sheep and hogs and home-steads 40 acres. Read more about her [here](#).



FLEA CONTROL MINUS THE POISONS

BY CASSIE LANGSTRAAT

Why do fleas have such a scary reputation? They are half the size of regular flies, and they can't even fly.. Yet they cause twice the fear. I'd say most of it has to do with that good ol' thing we call history. You know, that thing that happened a long time ago. I think it was called the plague or something? Everyone always associates these darn fleas with these massive outbreaks of disease. Yes they did contribute to the spreading of these diseases, centuries ago, but here's the catch: there was a disease to begin with back then.

Paul Wheaton, the crowned "Duke of Permaculture" writes about this association between disease and fleas in his article, "Die! Die! whatever". He encourages people to stop with the freak out. He talks about how most people panic about fleas in their house because they think the fleas will somehow infect them with deadly sickness. In reality though, the chances of that happening are slim to none. He explains,

"To get the plague you also need rodents. But not just any rodents, the rodents must have the plague. The fleas must bite the rodents and then bite you. Since fleas don't travel far, and this page is about controlling fleas in your home, you would have to have rodents with the plague in your home. Nearly all plague cases involve rodents living far away from people's homes. Therefore, the odds of you getting the plague from

a flea in your home is about one in a skillion jillion. You have a better chance of being elected president and then getting hit by lightning on your first day in office."

There you go. Stop panicking people! If you want to actually deal with fleas without poisoning your home and yourselves, read on.

Before we get to the whole getting rid of them part, it is really important to get to know them a little bit. Keep your enemies closer, remember? Anyway, Paul talks about how many businesses that sell these chemical poison flea controllers exaggerate the numbers regarding flea reproduction. They do this often to, you guessed it, scare you more! They take the absolute highest possible egg production of a flea and throw that number around to scare people into thinking they are going to have a major flea infestation so they buy more poisons. However, the numbers they spout are not reality folks. If you look at the hard facts of flea life you will see it is actually difficult for fleas to survive in most situations, especially clean ones. So, Paul warns that when you see numbers like 125,000 fleas a month you need to take a step back and realize that someone is probably just trying to sucker you for money.

Another thing to be wary of, is the misconception that each itch means a new bite. You probably won't sense the initial bite but you will get an in-

dividual itch five to six hours later. Then another one will happen about 24 to 48 hours later, but from the same bite. Paul talks about how this again turns on people's panic zone because they think there are way more fleas in the house than there actually are.

Now that we have established and overcome the fictions about fleas, we can move on to actually dealing with them. According to Paul, the best option is diatomaceous earth. This is a white powder that is a type of hard-shelled algae. Paul explains that it works on any insect with an exoskeleton. On a microscopic level, this stuff is really sharp so it works by getting into the joints of the insect and basically just cuts it up. Either that, or it scratches the insect's waxy layer which allows moisture within the insect to escape.

The good and most important thing about DE is that it is totally fine for it to get all over and inside humans, pets and livestock. Paul mentions how tons of farmers use this to get rid of insects in grain and how they feed it to all their animals to get rid of whatever is bothering them! For home use, Paul advises to spread a consistently paper thin layer on your carpet and leave it for a few days, and then vacuum away! There are two cautions on this front - make sure you get food grade (not pool grade - that has icky stuff in it) and try to avoid breathing in massive amounts of this stuff. Just like, you know, try to avoid inhaling massive amounts of any kind of dust. Also, make sure

to keep this stuff dry! When it gets wet, the whole being sharp thing no longer happens.

There are a few other tactics to flea control. Vacuuming does the trick because fleas want to leave their cocoons when they feel vibration. Obviously, the vacuum provides this. Paul advises to add DE to this technique because then they will end up in the vacuum bag with it. Bye bye fleas. Just spread DE all over the floor in between vacuum periods and you can get away with only vacuuming once every 3 days.

A good way to track your progress with any flea control is setting up a little light trap. Fleas are attracted to light and they drown easily. So, you can just set up a little lamp shining onto a plate of soapy water and wait 'til morning. Count how many dead fleas are in the water each morning and hopefully watch the number decrease. This tactic alone will probably not get rid of all of your fleas but is a good way to measure the amount you have and if your flea control tactics are working.

Another strategy people have found useful is a dehumidifier. Paul explains that fleas need 50% or higher humidity to live. They need water and they can't really get it from anywhere but the air so it makes sense, get rid of the moisture in the air, and they will dehydrate and die. That is the theory anyway. Paul has done a few experiments with this that have not been hugely successful but he mentions that he really does think

it has potential. The next tactic that comes up a lot with flea control is heat. There is actual science behind this one so it has some merit. Although, Paul notes his personal experiments have been lacking. However, both of his heat experiments were conducted on rainy days so he believes that the relative humidity from the rain stayed high enough to keep the fleas alive. Dang nabbit!

Many people also claim that shampooing or steam cleaning your carpet can get rid of fleas. They would either drown in the soapy water or die from the heat of the steam. This is nice because it affects the flea at all stages of life.

A really easy tactic to consider is lightening up on the carpet load. People that have carpet-less homes rarely rarely have flea problems so this could be worth it if you are having no other success. Another thing to keep in mind is to be consistent in washing your clothes and bedding. Paul points out that if you have flea bites above your knees, then they are definitely in your bed. Keep your stuff washed. Easy peasy.

On the pet front, Paul has one main suggestion: flea comb. He says to flea comb the animal so that the fleas end up in soapy water. Drown drown drown for the fleas. Also make sure to keep your pet's bedding washed and dust the bed and them with DE.

The last hugely important thing to talk about is the ol' poison issue.

Here is a nice way to put it — DON'T USE IT. Nearly all of the warning labels on these chemical flea controls will say it all. You will end up poisoning yourself and your animals if you use this toxic crap.

Paul makes a huge note about not using borate powder. He realizes that it says it is the least toxic but in reality, this stuff is bad bad bad. The same exact thing goes for pyrethrins/pyrethrum. It gets pushed as natural and non toxic but it often causes poisonings with all sorts of terrible symptoms. Flea bombs - another horrifying idea, you are literally putting poison on everything. Just please, no. And if it isn't already obvious at this point, don't use flea collars on your pet. Poison, all over your loving little ball of fur. No thanks.

Basically, diatomaceous earth is going to be the most effective route, however there are definitely many options out there that can work while still avoiding the whole poisoning everything and everyone you love thing.

Cassie is a writer based out of California where she spends a lot of her time obsessed with reading, writing, gardening, feminism and food. Read more of her writing here.





FARMER'S BEST FRIEND: THE FARM DOG

BY MEREDITH SKYER

If you close your eyes and imagine a picture perfect farm, chances are it will feature a red barn sitting atop rolling fields of green, a cow in the pasture, chickens chasing bugs in the garden and of course, the beloved farm dog, dashing here and there amidst the madness and loving every minute of it.

Whether he's helping to herd sheep in the field, or sleeping in a pile of baby goats in the barn, the farm dog provides essential assistance with their high energy and dedication to their jobs.

Centuries of careful breeding and training have made farm dogs into the perfect helping hand. Specific breeds carry ideal characteristics for keeping livestock in line, or protecting vulnerable animals from predators, and have been indispensable to farmers for hundreds of years.

HERDING DOGS

These high-energy dogs provide invaluable assistance in controlling large herds of livestock, including



sheep, goats, and cattle, but if they aren't properly trained and worked, their energy will just as easily be spent on destruction.

Herding dogs need almost constant mental and physical stimulation to

keep them from turning into destruction machines. They're highly intelligent and were bred to be working dogs; the farm is a natural place for them to expend this energy. If herding dogs aren't being worked properly they will turn their attention to shredding your furniture, digging holes in the lawn, and pacing impatiently. Not only is it bad for the herding dog's mental well being to not be worked, it also causes them to put on weight which can lead to a myriad of illnesses and joint problems.

Best dogs for herding:

English Shepherd

Australian Shepherd

Border Collie

Australian Cattle dog/Blue Heeler

German Shepherd

LIVESTOCK GUARDIAN DOGS: LGD

Livestock guardian dogs are fiercely loyal and highly suspicious of strangers and animals outside of their herd. As puppies, LGD's are placed with the herd they're designed to protect and spend all day and all night with that herd. They come to recognize the animals as part of their pack, and will alert the herd (and you) to any danger present on the farm. LGD's are large and strong, and have thick, wooly coats to keep them warmed outdoors in the winter.

LGD's can be difficult to train, as they are known for being stubborn and independent. On the plus side,

they're great with kids and can make wonderful family dogs, although they will be suspicious and agitated around strange people and animals.

Best Dogs for Livestock Guardians:

Anatolian Shepherd

Maremma

Great Pyrenees

Komondor

VERMIN HUNTERS

Predators and pests are a big problem on any farm, large or small. When rats are diminishing your feed supply or rabbits are picking at the lettuce, help can come in the form of a hunting dog. Terriers are great at seeking out problem predators and pests and eradicating problems. Unfortunately, they are also great at hunting small livestock, such as chickens. Vermin hunting dogs must be very specifically trained from puppyhood to do this job effectively, and it helps immensely if they come from breeding stock that was developed for this purpose.

If you're going to get a dog to hunt down vermin, do your research, get the dog from a reputable breeder, and train them well. Of course, it's still possible that your vermin chaser will also be a chicken chaser, so either leave the poultry locked up while these terriers are on the job, or get a good barn cat instead.

BEST DOGS FOR HUNTING VERMIN:

Jack Russell terrier

Airedale Terrier

Cairn Terrier

FARM DOG CARE

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Farm dogs need extra special care to maintain their health and ability to do their job. Spending so much time outdoors either herding, hunting, or keeping a watchful eye can be detrimental to their health. There are several things you can do to ensure your farm dog is in top shape.

First of all, make sure he or she is up to date on vaccinations. Dogs that come into contact with livestock and wildlife often are more susceptible to viruses such as rabies and distemper.

Due to the fact that they tend to spend more time outside than the average dog, they're also more likely to have troubles with parasites like heartworm, fleas, and ticks. Keep up to date on medications and check your dog often for changes in weight, temperament, and behavior.

HOUSING

Will your farm dog live in the house with you, or outdoors? If they'll be primarily outdoors, be sure to get a space set up before you bring the puppy home.

Outdoor dogs need a warm, dry location to rest. Whether it's a doghouse or the barn, make sure there's a comfortable private space where your farm dog can go to get some peace and get out of the elements.

TRAINING

Many farm dogs are allowed to wander the property.

Without fencing to keep them contained, the dog needs to be trained to obey boundaries.

The last thing you want is for your dog to be running into the road or wandering into neighbor's property to snack on their chickens.

It's essential to start training a farm dog at a very young age to get them acclimated to the farm life.

Teaching a dog the complexities of herding without snapping, and knowing the boundaries of your property takes time and plenty of effort. Plan to dedicate several hours per week to basic obedience and specialized training.

Farm dogs are not only farmer's best friend, they're essential to the smooth operation of the farm and safety of its residents.

If you're considering adding a four-legged helper to your homestead, be sure to do your research and be prepared to provide care and training for the long haul. These highly intelligent canines need you just as much as you need them.

Meredith lives in Upstate New York on her homestead, Imaginacres. Read more from her here.

A photograph of a wooden table with a yellow beeswax cloth featuring a green floral pattern. The cloth is partially folded and draped over the edge of the table. The text 'BEESWAX CLOTH' is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

BEESWAX CLOTH

BY ANGI SCHNEIDER



**ELMINATE THE NEED FOR
PLASTIC WRAP IN YOUR KITCHEN**



Several years ago our family began eliminating plastic from our kitchen. Some things were easy to eliminate or, at least, drastically reduce. We began doing things like freezing in glass instead of plastic containers. We also began using glass bowls with plastic lids to store leftovers — although the lids are plastic, this has greatly reduced our use of zippered bags and plastic containers.

But it was hard to find a substitute for plastic wrap. Even though we don't use it often, we still used it at times and it bothered me. Then, I learned about coating fabric with beeswax to make a plastic wrap substitute.

I followed the directions exactly (which is not something I normally do) and ended up with not only a mess, but also a product that didn't work very well. But I knew it could work. So, I talked to my 16 year old beekeeper son and he helped me figure out a better way to coat the fabric.

First of all, beeswax will begin melting when its temperature gets between 143-148 degrees Fahrenheit. Which means anytime the wax temperature is below that, it will start to harden.

Beeswax will start to smoke and can catch on fire when its temperature reaches 204 degrees Fahrenheit. Which means it is best to use a double boiler or an oven to melt beeswax. However, if I'm only melting a few ounces, I just use a pan and low heat.

Beeswax is hard to completely clean off utensils and pans. It's best to use ones that are set aside just for working with beeswax.

SUPPLIES:

- Beeswax
- Cotton Fabric
- Pan or Double Boiler (you can use a pan with water and put a wide mouth canning jar inside to hold the wax)
- Basting Brush (I use a cheap paint brush for this)
- Large Baking Sheet (Do not use your good one, you will never get all the wax off of it)

DIRECTIONS:

Turn on oven to 150 degrees Fahrenheit and put the baking sheet inside. Cut the fabric to the size you want. I like mine big so, mine range from 18"X18" to 24"X36"

Melt about 3oz of beeswax for each piece of fabric. I usually melt only enough for one piece at a time.

When oven reaches 150degrees, remove the baking sheet from oven, place fabric on it. If the fabric hangs over, just fold it until it no longer hangs over the baking sheet.

Brush the melted wax onto the fabric. If you had to fold the fabric, turn it over and brush the wax on the other side.

Put the baking sheet back in the oven for 4-5 minutes.

Remove the baking sheet. Brush the fabric one more time to distribute the wax that is already on the fabric.



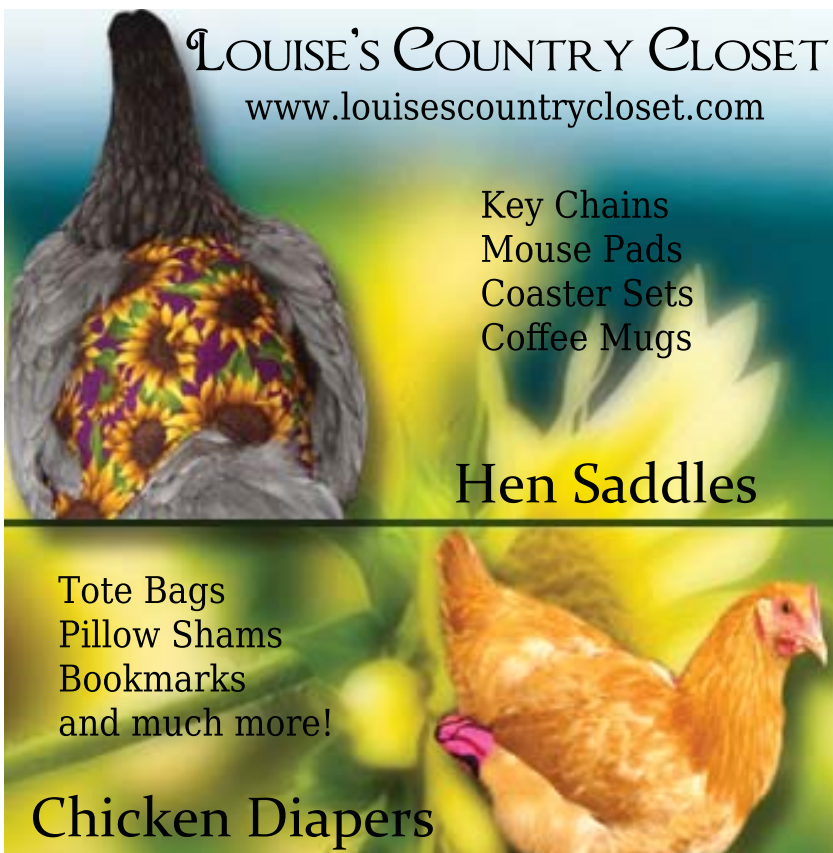
Holding two corners, remove the fabric from the baking sheet. Hold for just a minute to let it cool off a bit. Then hang it up where it can finish cooling. I hang mine from metal shelves in my garage or have my 12 year old son hold it in front of a fan. When it is completely cool (about 3-4 minutes) it is ready to use.

You can use this fabric to cover bowls or pan. You can also use it to wrap cheese or breads. Do not use it to cover a hot pan as the beeswax will come off.

To clean, rinse under cold or warm water. If you use soap or hot water, the wax will begin to come off the fabric.

Over time the fabric will begin to lose its coating. To recoat, follow the steps above. However, instead of putting the wax on first and then baking, bake the fabric first and use a wax drenched brush to evenly redistribute the wax on the fabric.

Angi writes and blogs and homesteads in South Texas. Find out more about her here.



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HOMESCHOOL PRIMER

BY AMANDA WITMAN

HOMESCHOOLING SPECIAL SECTION BROUGHT TO YOU BY OAK MEADOW



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YES, YOU CAN!

Sometimes the hardest part of getting started with homeschooling is believing that you can do it. I'm here to tell you that yes, you can homeschool!

There are many reasons that lead families to consider homeschooling. Often it comes up when a child's school is not a good match for their needs. Sometimes it's driven by a parent's desire to guide their child's learning in the context of their own values. Sometimes children need a more flexible schedule in order to pursue athletic or artistic training, and sometimes parents simply can't imagine missing out on the excitement of educational discovery. How do you know for sure if homeschooling is the right fit for you and your child? The decision to homeschool is a big one, and it is normal to have feelings of uncertainty before taking such a big leap.

EXPERTISE

Always remember that you are the #1 expert on your child. This means you have insights that classroom teachers do not have. You know your child's learning style and can give him or her more targeted attention and personal support than even the best classroom teacher ever could, even if you have other children or responsibilities at home. Your intuition and

your knowledge of your child are two of your most powerful assets as a homeschooling parent. None of us have all of the answers up front, but you can trust your heart to be a trustworthy tool for figuring it out as you go.

TEACHING

Parents with a wide range of educational levels and experiences can successfully homeschool. You do not have to be an experienced teacher to be able to homeschool your child! You also do not have to have an advanced education of any kind. One of the joys of homeschooling is learning new things alongside your child. Some common questions about homeschooling are addressed on the Oak Meadow website and here in this blog.

If you find the word "teacher" feels uncomfortable, try thinking of yourself as your child's educational facilitator. You don't have to teach everything yourself; you can draw from many resources and engage other adults to help your child learn. There are many options available; Oak Meadow offers support from educational counselors and distance-learning options. Be creative in your approach, and trust in your ability to coordinate the pieces that make up the whole.

HOMESCHOOL PRIMER

COMMUNITY

A new adventure can feel easier when others who have gone before can share what they have learned. There are successful homeschoolers all over the country and all over the world. Many of them have organized groups that meet on a regular basis so that parents can swap ideas and children can connect with their peers. It really helps to know you're not alone in this experience. If you're lucky, there's a home-school group already going strong in your area. If not, it might seem at first that there are no local homeschoolers to be found. But don't let that stop you from continuing to look! Ask at the public library, local co-ops, learning centers (history, environmental, museums, whatever you have nearby). Put up posters; start a playgroup. You might need to stretch your definition of "local." You might even choose to seek community online. Check out Oak Meadow's Get Connected page for more information about online resources.

FLEXIBILITY

Homeschooling can be as flexible or as structured as you need or want it to be. Some homeschooling parents work part-time or full-time and focus on supporting their child's learning when they're not at work. Others work out a patchwork schedule that allows them to

be present as their children learn. Some engage the help of caregivers as part of their family's homeschooling team.

Some families have demanding travel or training schedules, so they fit homeschooling in around those activities. Other families have need a non-negotiable daily/weekly/monthly routine at home. All families are unique in their needs and solutions. There are no "right" answers. It's up to you to find and follow the rhythm that works for your family.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the U.S., each state has a different take on what homeschoolers must do to stay in compliance with education laws. These requirements may seem overwhelming, but families have succeeded in homeschooling in every state and in numerous other countries. Start by contacting the Superintendent of Schools in your town or the Department of Education in your state or locality to find out what is expected. Remember that some of the people you speak with may not have experience with homeschooling and might have misconceptions about the state's role in home learning, so be patient and persistent. The Home School Legal Defense Association has excellent information and resources, including up-to-date laws for every state.

GETTING STARTED

Homeschooling is a big adventure, one that most of us have no previous experience with. If you're not sure where to start or how to proceed, there are many resources and curriculum packages available to take the guesswork out of it. Oak Meadow curriculum is designed to make it easy for parents and students to make sure they are not missing anything along the way. If you have questions, Oak Meadow's educational counselors are happy to

help.

Often when I tell people that my children are homeschooled, they say something like, "I could never homeschool my children." Perhaps they don't need or want to homeschool, and that's just fine. It's not right for every family. But if you want to homeschool, you can!

Amanda Witman is a homeschooling mother of four, musician, urban homesteader, enthusiastic lifelong learner, and Oak Meadow's Social Media Coordinator. Visit Oak Meadow on Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, and their blog, In the Meadow.

Oak Meadow offers everything you need to homeschool your child in kindergarten through 12th grade.



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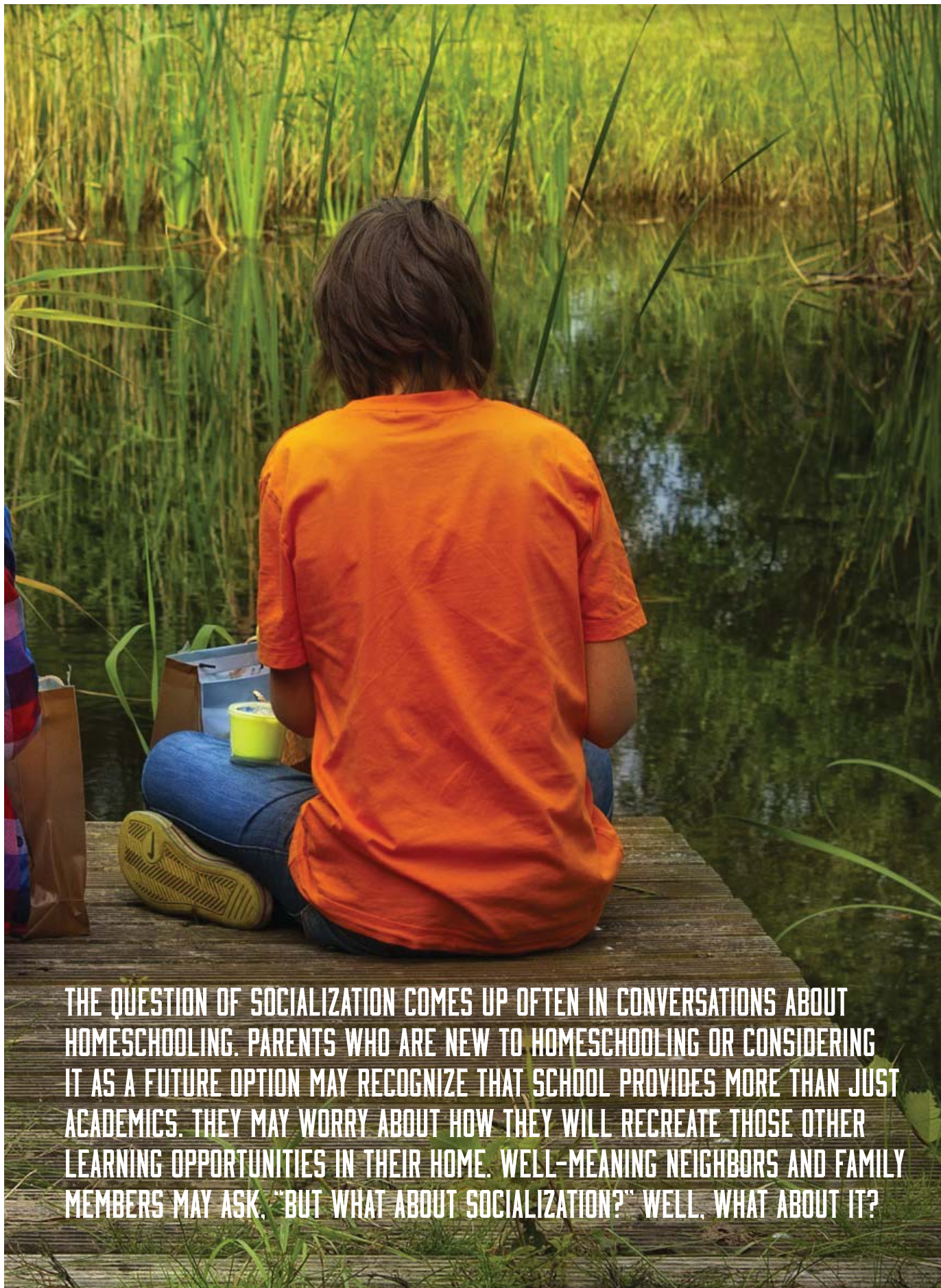
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WHAT ABOUT SOCIALIZATION?

BY AMANDA WITMAN



THE QUESTION OF SOCIALIZATION COMES UP OFTEN IN CONVERSATIONS ABOUT HOMESCHOOLING. PARENTS WHO ARE NEW TO HOMESCHOOLING OR CONSIDERING IT AS A FUTURE OPTION MAY RECOGNIZE THAT SCHOOL PROVIDES MORE THAN JUST ACADEMICS. THEY MAY WORRY ABOUT HOW THEY WILL RECREATE THOSE OTHER LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN THEIR HOME. WELL-MEANING NEIGHBORS AND FAMILY MEMBERS MAY ASK, "BUT WHAT ABOUT SOCIALIZATION?" WELL, WHAT ABOUT IT?

HOMESCHOOL PRIMER

WHAT IS SOCIALIZATION, ANYWAY?

Societies have an interest in making sure the younger generation has the social skills and expectations needed to fit in with and be productive members of the group. The Oxford Learners Dictionary defines socialization as the process by which somebody, especially a child, learns to behave in a way that is acceptable in their society. Many people expect schools to do the job of seeing children through this process of becoming acceptably behaved citizens who understand the norms of their society and how to fit in without being a burden to the community. So they might wonder how homeschoolers will gain these skills outside of school.

IS THIS SOMETHING I NEED TO WORRY ABOUT?

Not at all. If you and your children are involved in activities with a range of other people, your children will have many opportunities for healthy social development. In fact, some people assert that the kinds of social learning situations that occur in the classroom and on the playground impart a very different skill set than what children will actually need as adults. Typical schools group children by age and developmental ability, resulting in large groups of children who all have similar skills — and shared deficiencies. In contrast, homeschoolers tend to

interact with more diverse groups and individuals. So they are able to gain new skills from people who are much more socially adept and affirm those skills by mentoring those who are younger or less experienced. The more socially experienced members of the group provide a model for the others to learn from. This is a valuable form of socialization that is not usually part of social learning in a group of same-age children.

HOW CAN I MEET MY CHILD'S NEEDS FOR SOCIALIZATION? HOW DO OTHERS FAMILIES DO THIS?

Socialization happens in any situation you can think of where your children are interacting with other people. Music lessons, art classes, sports teams, church groups, scouting, 4-H, wilderness groups, summer camps, mission work, community activism, and all sorts of other activities provide the opportunity for homeschoolers to interact with others and develop interpersonal skills.

If your child needs more social opportunities, they'll let you know. You might seek out a homeschool group in your area or start one if one doesn't already exist. There may be volunteer opportunities at a local nursing home or daycare center where your child can learn from elders and/or mentor younger children. Perhaps a neighbor would like someone to help them side-by-side with yardwork or housework.

You might match your child with a caring teen or adult who has similar interests. If you live in a very isolated area, you might consider using the Internet or a pen-pal arrangement as a way for your child to connect with others socially through the written word. Here are more ideas from readers on Oak Meadow's Facebook page.

There are many "right" ways to foster healthy socialization!

WHAT DO I SAY TO FAMILY/FRIENDS WHO PRESS THE ISSUE?

Well-meaning family and friends may react with concern. Sometimes it can be helpful to dig a bit deeper to uncover their fears and respond from there. What exactly are they worried about? What social skills do they think will be missing from your child's experience? Perhaps a simple explanation of how you will fill that gap is all they need to hear.

When you choose to homeschool, you may appear to be removing your child from the community's collective method of raising its children. People may wonder if this means your family will now become isolated. They may assume that your child will be at home all day and will not have enough of a chance to develop and practice social skills. They may know adults who are unable to function in a socially appropriate way, and although there is no reason to connect this outcome with homeschooling, they may wonder if there could be a connection.

They may be concerned about homeschooling simply because they do not have any experience (yet!)

with healthy, well-adjusted, well-socialized homeschoolers. It's likely that they were indoctrinated with the belief that schools are the only place where children can learn what they need to know to succeed socially. Homeschoolers typically prove that wrong, but it may take some time for the people in your life to see that evidence unfold.

It may help to remember that these questions are generally posed out of love and concern for your child's well-being. Be patient with the process and assure them that with your attentive care, your children are doing fine.

HOW DO I MAKE SURE MY CHILDREN GET WHAT THEY NEED?

Decide for yourself what social and behavioral skills you feel are essential for your child to learn. Consider your child's developmental level as you set your expectations. Stay tuned in to your child and his or her needs, and follow your inner compass in figuring out how best to meet those needs.

Make connections with others in your community and include your children in those interactions. Model socially appropriate behavior in different situations and support your children as they practice interacting with various people. Many homeschoolers find that socialization comes easily and naturally as part of their everyday interactions with others.

So the next time a well-meaning friend asks, "But what about socialization?" just smile and invite them to become part of your child's ever-expanding social network.

HOMESCHOOL PRIMER



HOMESCHOOLING MULTIPLE CHILDREN

BY AMANDA WITMAN

How can I homeschool multiple children? If you've asked this question, you're in good company. Meeting the needs of multiple children is a challenge for any parent. But homeschooling parents need to be able to do it all day long. How is that possible?

THERE IS NO ONE RIGHT WAY

Homeschooling families run a wide gamut, from "regimented" to "easy-going." Where does your family fit on this spectrum? Some parents would ideally prefer a more structured approach, but reality requires them to be more laid-back to make it work. Others find that a carefully planned rhythm helps them stay on track with everyone's needs.

Set the tone of adaptability in your home and model it for your children to follow. If you are calm, creative, and flexible in meeting their needs, they will learn in time to be patient and flexible in getting their own needs met.

Oak Meadow is designed to be highly adaptable. You may find that you want to go more in-depth with some lessons and skim through others. Some lessons can be modified so that children at multiple levels can learn from them. If two or more of your children are close in age or at developmentally similar levels, you might simplify things by working with them at a single level.

LET YOUR OBSERVATIONS GUIDE YOU

Think about each of your children

individually. What do they love? What engages each one's attention like nothing else? Use your observations to create tools that help them stay occupied while you are working with the others. Finding safe, reliable ways to keep little hands and minds busy when you need it will go a long way.

Keep an open mind about the times of day when you work with your older children. Can attention be given to academics or projects after the younger children are in bed? Consider also when your youngest children need your attention the most – and least. Are they happiest sharing your attention mid-morning or just after a nap?

CREATE A PREDICTABLE BUT FLEXIBLE RHYTHM

By using your children's own rhythms as a starting point for the whole family's rhythm, you can maximize the chance of success.

When everyone in the family knows what to expect, less time is spent in communication about what each day will hold. Provide a general rhythm to guide the whole family. Perhaps your homeschool rhythm flows best around mealtimes, nap-times, and bedtimes. Post a simple chart of your rhythm that everyone can understand and try to follow.

If you try something and it doesn't work, use that information to adjust your approach and continue moving forward.

CAPITALIZE ON THEIR INDEPENDENCE

In what ways can each child be independent? Independence for an older child might mean reading or working on lessons by themselves for a set period of time. For a baby, independence might mean naptime, time with toys on the floor, or an extended ride on someone's back.

Can the older children amuse the younger children while the middle children get needed attention? Even young "big siblings" can sometimes successfully engage very little ones with funny faces, rhyming songs, finger plays, stories, and toys. In some larger families, each older child is paired up with a younger child. If your older children are not yet at this stage, consider inviting a homeschooled teen to help you out on a regular basis.

PRIORITIZE THOUGHTFULLY

Just as important as the ways in which your children can be independent are the ways each is unable to work without your help. Where do they need your help and attention most? Make those moments count. You may need to spend some time observing and assessing your children to figure out where they need the greatest support.

If you have to ask a child to wait for your attention, acknowledge that you are asking them to do something important and helpful. The most successful cooperation happens when those involved feel their needs are recognized and valued.

TAKE TIME TO RECHARGE

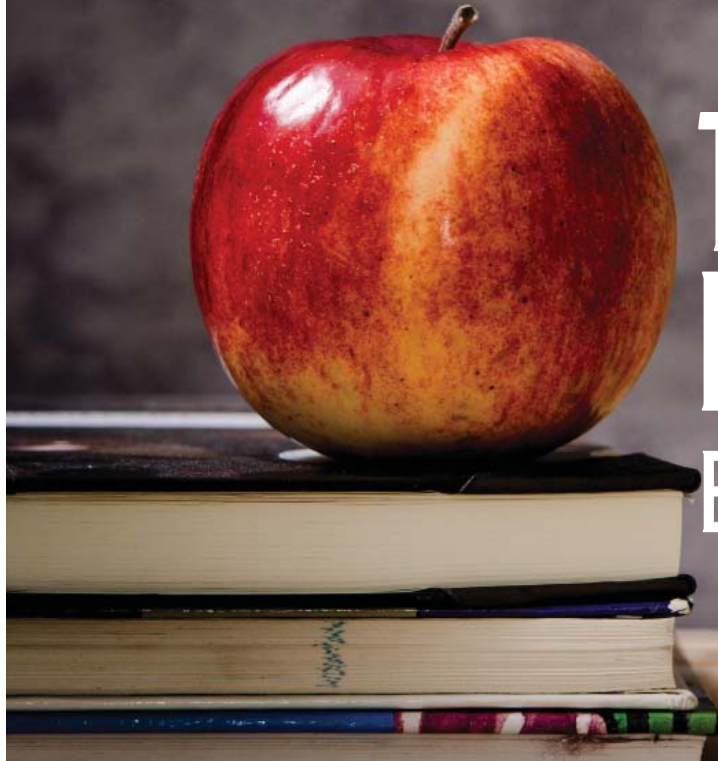
Always remember to take care of your own basic needs so that you can be as patient, creative, and flexible as possible. Homeschooling multiple children is a mighty challenge. Try to connect with others who share your values, can relate to your struggles, and can offer ideas that you might not have thought of. You might consider homeschooling cooperatively with another family or group to share the load.

MAINTAIN PATIENCE. Feed your own needs so that you have plenty of inner reserves when you most require them. Approach the issue of nurturing multiple children as a problem that can and will be solved.

KEEP IT ALL IN PERSPECTIVE

When you have a challenging day or week, remind yourself of why you started homeschooling in the first place. Chances are your reasons for homeschooling will be much more compelling than your challenges. Do all you can to savor the time you have at home with your children because this time with your children is just a season.

Seek ideas and support from others who have been in similar shoes. Love your children, be responsive to their needs, do your best to be flexible and adaptable in your approach to homeschooling, and trust that it will be enough.



THE REASONS I HOMESCHOOL BY: MELISSA PRICE

I'm doing it. We're doing it. It's a family thing and we are getting the hang of it. As a former public school teacher, I probably see homeschooling much differently than most homeschooling parents do, and I have observed and enjoyed a few gems while planning for a new education for my children.

There are more than a couple of reasons why I decided to homeschool this year, but one major reason is choice. This school year I have had a potpourri of curriculum and programs and options from which to choose, and I can design the education that fits each of my children exclusively. In addition,

the individualized pace each child needs to learn and the rigor, remediation (if necessary), creativity, and freedom of choice are on a one-on-one basis rather than a whole group "everyone on the same page" setting. Until this change, I didn't know (or had completely considered) my children would have appreciated this opportunity. They have embraced the chosen curriculums, self-paced days, and chance to learn through their individual learning styles. In addition, I have been able to add into their curriculum subjects and skills that are not offered in our school system or ones they are interested in.

I have appreciated the flexibility

of homeschooling and so have my children. In the past (just as other public school parents and students have to address) any extracurricular activities had to be done after school hours. It has always proven difficult to get in extra activities and homework at the end of a long school day while maintaining an enjoyment of those activities and not be exhausted. As homeschoolers, my children have been able to participate in clubs, part-time work, church activities, and field trips they would have not had the time to take part in if they were still in public school. As a student many years ago, I was able to go on a few school field trips a year. My 4-H trips were approved and appreciated as learning experiences from my principal and teachers. As a teacher myself, I have seen field trips completely cut out of the yearly school schedule. The flexibility to plan and attend trips to enhance my children's learning; additional time for my son to get in the woods in the mornings and evenings (he wants to be a wildlife officer); bonus time to make some extra money, and a more accommodating schedule have suited our family well.

Parents who homeschool have the awesome gift of discipling their children. As hard as I have worked to teach morals and values and etiquette to students in my own public school classroom setting, without home reinforcement and support my efforts were often futile. I sadly realized that as many hours as I was giving to others children, I was neglecting my own. With a son in

the 9th grade, I re-evaluated what I wanted him to leave our home knowing. I wanted a much stronger faith and knowledge of the Bible for him and knew the hours away from home in public school each day wouldn't allow him a more in-depth study of God's word or time to focus on building a relationship with God or even further developing his spiritual gifts. With the hustle and bustle of a public school schedule, devotions, prayer, and Biblical study tend to fall short. Now, I have daily morning Bible reading and devotionals with my daughter, while my son has his own devotion time in the mornings and evenings and he and I have a time during the day we discuss what he learned from his daily reading.

I have enjoyed the opportunity to provide my children with the socialization that objectors and naysayers of home schooling argue is lacking. So often I am asked whether I am concerned with the lack of socialization my children suffer as we (assumedly) sit at home for days and weeks and don't venture near other life forms. NOT TRUE! What most parents don't consider is that their child is socializing with children of only the same age during their eight hour shift in public school. My daughter may be in drama with younger and older students while my son may be dove shooting in the morning with the community men. Both of my children attend classes and social events with multiple age groups. Neither of my children are without social opportunities and I have ap-

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preciated the many opportunities each of them has had to be mentored and taught by adults whom they may never have had the opportunity to meet if we were not home schooling.

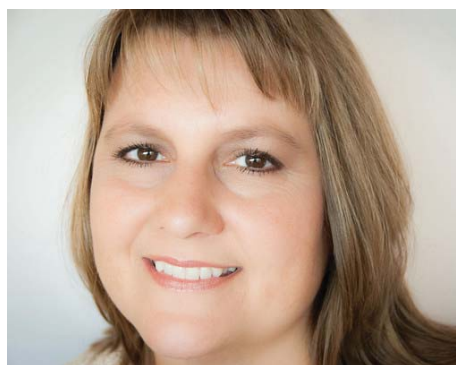
Finally, an extra nugget I would share I have enjoyed this school year is the opportunity to develop deeper relationships with my children. We have had more time to talk, to listen, to share, and to become better acquainted with one another. Although I have always dearly loved my children, I like them too. There are more times for hugs and laughing and working alongside one another. My daughter can help with dinner because she has time to be in the kitchen with me now—no rushing after school to get homework done! We can feed and water the livestock on a freezing cold morning without the pressure of a school bell...and then come inside and drink hot chocolate before settling into school. I have more time to share and more of myself to share because I am


giving to my children only during these homeschooling sessions. Our science lesson that would have never meant more to me than, “Did you get that page done?” was a shared interest in mermaid purses and hagfish and dorsal fins. I have found all the things I would have wished to participate in with my children in the past is now reality. I used to pride myself on being a parent INVOLVED in education. Not really. I was just a parent who tried to keep a finger on what my children were supposed to complete or turn in or study for. It’s just not the same. True hands-on involvement has opened a welcome door to growing more closely to my children.

This new venture has been scary and even overwhelming at times, but it has been nothing short of a blessing and a gift to my family. If you are even considering the prospect of homeschooling, let me encourage you to consider no longer, but rather stake your claim in a life-changing, rewarding experience.

Melissa Price was a public school teacher for nineteen years before deciding to homeschool her children.

She lives on a small farm in SC where she raises pigs, corn, bees, and chickens. Her family owns a dairy and sells raw Jersey milk, pastured pork, and grass-fed beef.



A photograph of a dense forest with tall, moss-covered evergreen trees. In the background, a river flows through a valley. The scene is misty and green, with moss hanging from the branches of the trees in the foreground.

5 TIPS FOR FITTING NATURE EDUCATION IN YOUR HOMESCHOOL

BY LESLIE TRIBBLE

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It seems counter-intuitive that homesteaders and other folks living outside the city might need some encouragement to include nature education into their homeschooling plans, but it's true. Many moms feel ill-equipped to start a nature study program. Sometimes they just don't know where to start or they might feel they don't really know enough about plants or wildlife. Here are five quick and easy tips to help you start your family on the nature education path.

JUST DO IT

Sometimes you just need a push to get you going. Start by committing to 15 minutes outside three times a week and then increase that to 30 minutes. Don't just go out when the weather's nice – some of nature's best times are during inclement weather. Remember, wildlife doesn't think, "Oh, it's raining. I think I'll stay inside today." Rain, snow and cooler temperatures often bring out the best discoveries. Ok, I'm from Wyoming – you can get a pass from going outside when the winds' whipping at 40 mph. Nobody likes to be out in that kind of weather!

GATHER SUPPLIES

You don't need anything to study nature, except your eyes, ears, mind

and heart. However, equipment is always fun and can add excitement and drama to your nature study. And it's definitely easier to observe the identifying characteristics of a bird if you have a good pair of binoculars. So here are some ideas for equipment you might want to start gathering.

First, you'll need a container to easily carry your equipment. A backpack, sack, basket or even a small suitcase works great. Designate this container as the NATURE BAG and don't use it for other purposes. An earth-friendly bag is great, but start with whatever you have. A plastic shopping bag will work at first. You can even start a family discussion about upgrading to a more sustainable container and research your options.

NOW – ON TO EQUIPMENT!

I'm going to list a variety of equipment that you might find useful, in no particular order of importance. Like I said earlier, start with what you have. If you have an inexpensive pair of binoculars, use them and start saving for a better pair. Incorporate the idea of sustainability and reduce, reuse, recycle as part of your nature study – a perfect correlation!

*Binoculars – maybe an inexpensive pair for younger children and better



pair for everyone else.

*Field Guides, appropriate to your region of birds, plants, wildlife – see what’s at your local library, call your state department of fish and game or see if there’s an Audubon group in your town that can provide recommendations.

*Notebook, pencil, colored pencils — a waterproof notebook is nice, but unnecessary.

*Magnifying glass or lens — can find these at thrift stores, big box stores or online.

*Thermometer, anemometer (wind meter) and a small poster of cloud types (download one online)

*Probes for touching without using fingers – actual lab probes or chopsticks, knitting needles, craft sticks (tongue depressors) all work just as well.

*6” Ruler (inches and centimeters)

*Tweezers

*Disposable sack for trash

*Large plastic lawn bags for impromptu rain coats

*Small first-aid kit — mainly Band-Aids, sting-kill swabs, sunscreen, a quick cold compress

Keep everything in the bag. Two bags can actually make your life easier — one for the house and one that stays in the car.

HAVE A PLAN

At first you might just want to get your kids used to being outside and actually engaging with the outdoors. This is structured time where they are learning about the world around them, not just running around or throwing rocks into the pond.

A good settling exercise is to always start by just being still. Spend five minutes simply listening and observing from right where you’re at. Focus on all the different sounds of birds, insects, water, frog, cars, whatever. What can you see from your spot? How many different plant types, colors, textures, rocks, clouds or animals do you observe? This exercise is a great way to focus your mind on what’s going on around you.

Next, take those observations and draw or write about them. Don’t stress perfection — stress quick notes, minimal line drawings or sketches and especially notes on your personal response to the experience. Later as you and your children become more practiced at observation, you can turn those notes into field notebooks. This is where older students can perfect drawing techniques, do some actual identification of species and start making correlations between isolated factors within a habitat. Why do you find a certain species of insect on certain plants? Why does one type of plant grow in a particular area but not another? Whatever habitat or area you spend most of your time in is actually one inter-related system that works together as a whole. Once older children discover and understand those relationships, the deeper their appreciation of the area becomes.

ADD-ONS

Once your nature education is underway, you can start adding in unit studies on topics like insects, weather, plants, mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians. Tie in your science curriculum to your nature study.



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Add in the arts. Sketching leads to drawing and painting. Photography is a great outlet for some children. Digital photography is perfect for children – they can take as many photos as they want! There are a number of free online photo editing programs which extend children's creativity. Musically inclined kids can write songs about their experiences outside and nature poetry is perfect for those with a literary flair. During the summer turn all those creative endeavors into entries for your county fair. It's great exposure for kids and they can earn some decent money from their efforts.

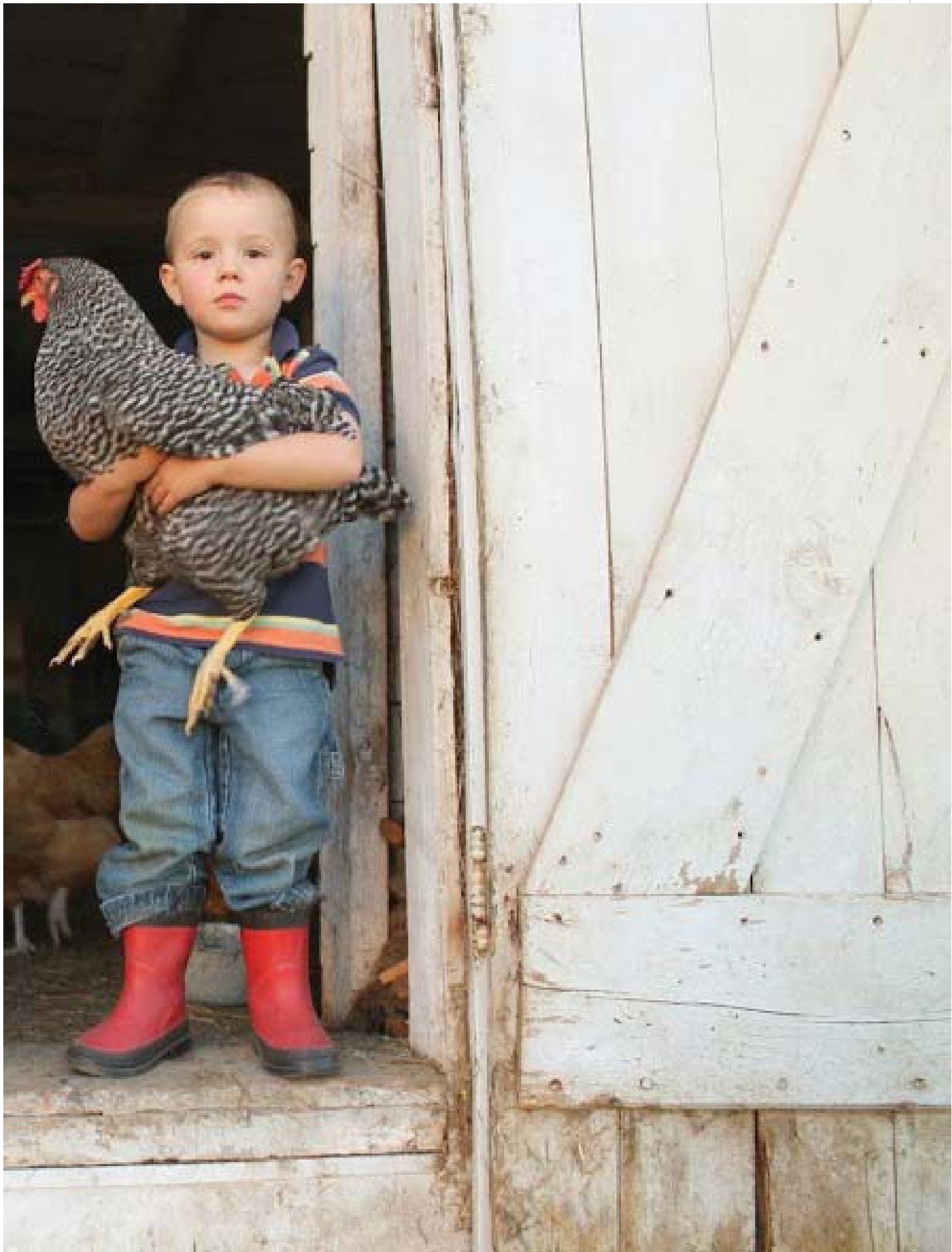
DON'T GIVE UP

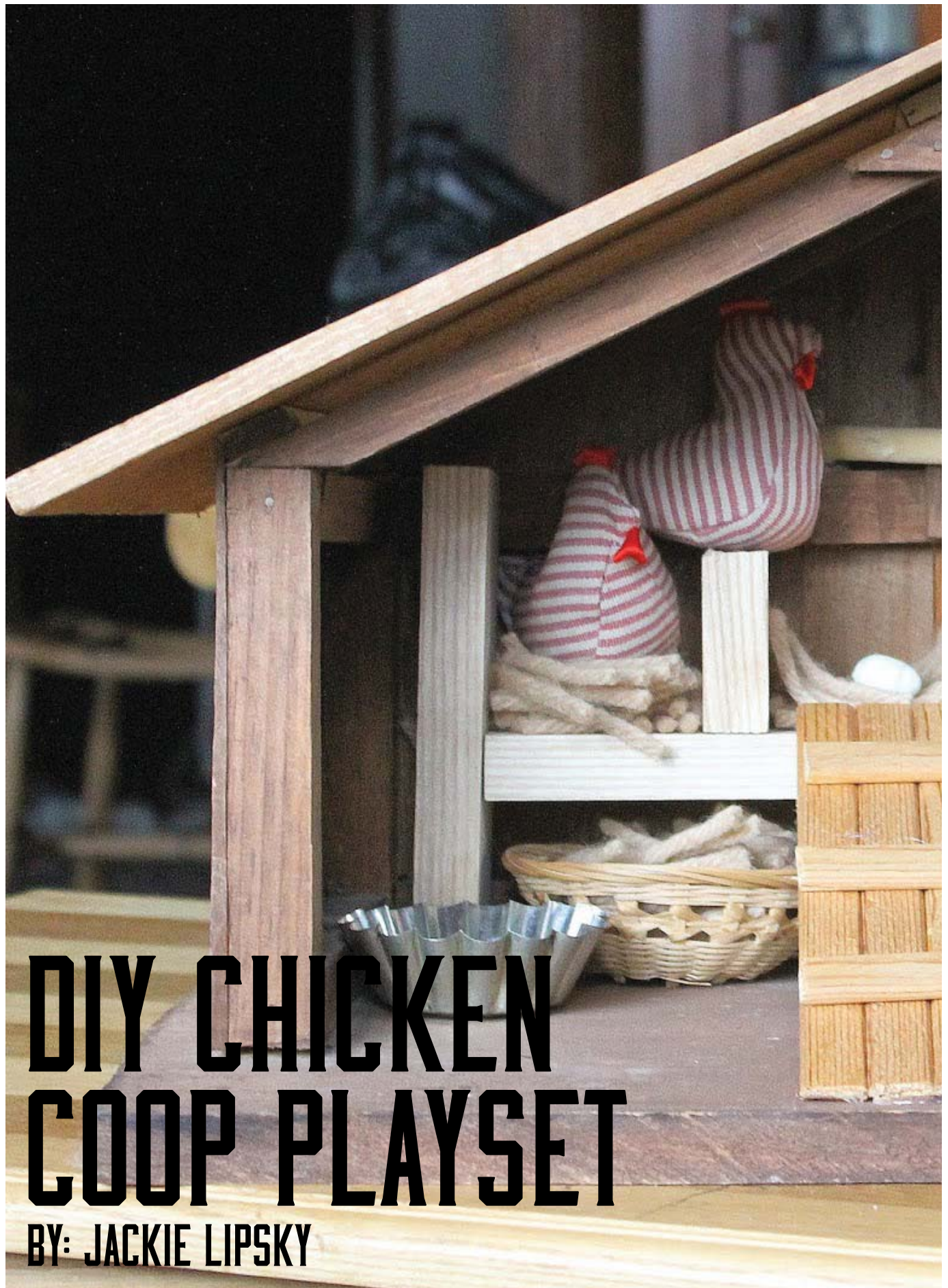
I know. You get behind in your school work and the first thing to go would be the "extra" classes like nature study. But don't fall into this trap. Nature education is the perfect way to tie all of your subjects together. Correlating nature with your science and math curricula is easy, as is using nature studies in English class. But how about History? Research local naturalists or folks who worked

at preserving open space in your community. Is there a trail nearby that once was an old rail bed to a mine? Was your area once the home for a now endangered or extinct species? Are there parks or forests nearby that you could learn the history of? You can also tie in your Religion studies. Learn what your faith teaches about the natural world and our place in it. Older students might want to research how area parks or nature centers are working with at-risk youth, or their plans for helping residents create a more sustainable lifestyle. Nature education can be the fabric which binds your homeschool curriculum together. It's also a great way to ease back into the swing of school again after any lengthy break. A little commitment is all it takes!

After homeschooling for 17 years, Leslie now enjoys spending time in the Wyoming wilderness with her spoiled rescue dog, taking photos and finding joy in the humble things in life. Leslie blogs about nature and nature study at www.sagebrushlessons.com.







DIY CHICKEN COOP PLAYSET

BY: JACKIE LIPSKY





The manger I got for \$2.99 at the thrift store. Figured it would be a good coop, too. Nesting boxes, stick for roosting all made from left over wood working supplies and condiment containers with jar lids as bases are the feeders.



The stuffed chickens are made from scrap fabric, red ribbon from a gift bag and stuffed with contents from an old pillow.



The eggs are also from the thrift store. The "hay" is left over wool from a rug hooking project.



All in all, a homemade coop that my kids love for less than \$5.00.
Makes mama happy too!

Hennies

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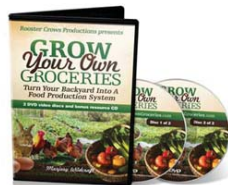
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