

Introduction

First, we kissed off corporate America as twenty-somethings, pledging to never again let dysfunctional executives walk all over us while greed runs wild. You might say our premature mid-life crisis may have been caused by indigestion. That's way before we realized an inconvenient truth or the dark side of Food, Inc. Back then, we overdosed on lattes with our cubicle clones and chowed down on fast food.

Then we did the unthinkable at age 30, freaking out our parents. We became farmers. Not the hundreds-of-acres and chemical- and fossil-fuel-addicted kind, but small, self-reliant, diversified and sustainable, focused on food crops and the health of the land, water and air, not dependent upon the USDA's commodity subsidies for corn and soybean row crops to survive.

Eating What We Grow

That's right. On our Green Acres in Green County, Wisconsin, you can actually eat what we grow on our farm, a farm that's completely powered by the wind and sun. Sometimes we use the sun to bake our bread in a Sun Oven or a woodstove to simmer our soups. Mostly, we try to eat from our gardens, from our community or from those growers who share our passion for making this world a better place.

We share our abundance through our award-winning Inn Serendipity Bed & Breakfast, now well entrenched on the foodie highway as road food (and a bed) that nourishes the mind, spirit and body. When we tour our gardens with visitors, we taste

as well as talk, sometimes returning to the house with armfuls of cucumbers. Our ethnic upbringing (ever heard of stir-fry made with bratwurst?) and 1970s suburban roots (remember TV dinners?) led to a culinary awakening in our 20s, enticed by urban ethnic restaurants, foreign exchange student housemates in college and discovering the tastes of the places we visited when we traveled around the world. Our life, we realized, unfolds through our food.



Inn Serendipity farmhouse with solar thermal system on roof, used to heat domestic hot water.

Return of the Farmstead and the Kitchen

Farmstead Chef is the first cookbook to capture the return to our nation's farmstead roots of independence, self-sufficiency and frugality, blended with the spice of modern living and a passion for transforming our planet. Whether you're a dedicated urbanite or live at the end of a country road, here's your chance to rediscover homegrown and homemade cooking, preserving the harvest, stocking the pantry and building local community around your kitchen table.

This cookbook redefines healthy eating in a way that reaches out to a more balanced worldview on food beyond calorie counts and fat-free or "meat-free" fake food. There's sugar, flour and salt in many of our recipes. Cheese and butter, too. No swearing off alcohol or caffeine, but the vodka draws flavor from raspberries picked at their peak ripeness and our version of a frozen mochaccino, made with organic Fair Trade coffee, won't suck your bank account dry. The use of tofu, soy milk and nutritional yeast is done selectively, because the recipes taste better and are more nutritious with them. Our Wisconsin Cornucopia Beer and Cheese Soup recipe is a Wisconsin State Fair award-winner for good reason: our selection of the best local, fresh, seasonal and chemical-free ingredients we could find.

For a decade and a half we've been experimenting, learning to let Mother Nature headline our show in the kitchen. We creatively blend textures, colors and smells with our recipes that appeal to all the senses, based on the abundance of nature, not scarce or hard-to-find ingredients. Once we rediscovered the tastes of garden-fresh, seasonal ingredients, no amount of flashy, food-styled advertising could

bring us back into the industrially grown, processed food fold.

Our great food formula strives to restore balance and encourages moderation, paired with an active and mindful lifestyle and workstyle (read: cut out the stress). For more about how our cooking is connected to the rest of our lives — to the energy we use, gardens we tend, work we love and community we share — you can look to the first two books we penned together, *Rural Renaissance* and *ECOpreneur*. They distill the specifics on sustainable living and detail our triple bottom line approach to running a green business, respectively.

Rethinking Eating

Starting with breakfasts and finishing with mouth-watering desserts, *Farmstead Chef* showcases the creative and budget-friendly side to eating lower on the food chain more often, while taking responsibility for the food we put into our bodies — by growing it, sharing it, savoring it. By lower on the food chain we mean more fruits and vegetables and less meat. Not, no meat. Included is a chapter on beverages, like fruit cordials and smoothies, and "Liam's favorites," recipes inspired by our son who loves his spinach and broccoli. This "farmsteadtarian" cookbook — preparing healthy meals with ingredients sourced as close as possible from a farm, ranch or artisan food purveyor — is anything but prescriptive, proclaiming you will die an early death if you touch an ounce of sugar, eat meat or unwind with a strawberry daiquiri at the end of the day.

Most of us live on a continuum, swinging like a pendulum back and forth between successes and failures, accomplishments and setbacks. So, too, is there a continuum of cooking that can respect nature, our

fellow farmers and, in the case of animals that may end up on our plate, the life that ceases so that ours may be nourished. There's plenty of evidence that too much of anything can lead to trouble. You alone must walk the line, armed now with the information to make more informed decisions regarding the world we live in and the foods we eat.

We learned it first in elementary school: our ancestors started out as roaming hunters and gatherers who feasted on wild animals and plant-based wild foods. Food crops eventually came from our discovery of agriculture — saving and planting seeds for wheat and grains, vegetables and fruits — forever transforming our relationship with the land and allowing us to build houses in permanent settlements. Next came domestication of animals and selectively breeding the wildness out of them. Today, we have cows, pigs and goats that would unlikely survive on their own if not for our care.

We've come a long way from such nomadic eating, having discovered and refined agriculture over the past 10,000 years to such a degree that the vast majority of us live in the city with only 2 percent of Americans providing enough “food” to feed the remaining 98 percent of us. We write “food” because much of the processed, zap-to-eat, grown-to-ship-well and last-on-the-shelf meals smack of convenience and corporate profits, not health or nutrition.

This reality of third-party food providers, combined with a growing awareness of what's happening to the planet and how we treat our animals, the land and the farmers, has spawned a diverse range of declared dietary preferences, from omnivore to vegan to locavore to flexitarian — and now, there's someone we call the farmsteadarian, a person who eats as much as possible from their own gardens,

community and, when necessary, from carefully selected sources as close to the farmers, ranchers, food artisans, beekeepers, brewers or growers as possible. Permaculturists, market growers and small-scale sustainable agriculture advocates share in common the belief that local food systems operate within and should nourish the living systems of which they're a part.

Rather than focus on what's not on the plate, we give thanks for what is. This cookbook is, in part, for all of you, though not every recipe will be for you.

The Kitchen

Illustrated by John's alluring, unpretentious photography that captures both the sense of place and



simple beauty found in potatoes and tomatoes, *Farmstead Chef*'s recipes provide a delicious roadmap to restore the planet and revitalize our lives. It's written to be accessible to all levels of cooking experience, so we've sprinkled some cooking tips wherever there might be a question on an ingredient, technique or process (remember, we're still learning ourselves). We know you know how to Google it; Enough said. For those who have just arrived back in the kitchen — other than knowing where to find the cereal or corkscrew for the wine — or have recently arrived to the local and organic food scene, we've created introductory cooking information on our website, farmsteadchef.com.

Just getting started? Don't panic if you don't have a chef's knife. Neither do we. We have an assortment of different knives, including one for paring, a serrated one for cutting breads and a large one to get through those watermelons. Our recipes are meant to be starting points for you to add to or subtract from, with your own five senses — and, of course, with whatever nature's bounty offers.

As for the rest of our kitchen, we have a nice collection of pots and pans, a few pots (including our workhorse, an inherited Le Creuset), wooden cutting boards, tongs, mixing spoons and spatulas, the Cadillac of any farmstead kitchen — a KitchenAid MixMaster — and a couple of drawers of both the low-tech and high-tech hand-me-down gadgets.

On the low-tech front, to work through buckets of apples, grapes and pears, we have a hand-crank peeler, a Foley Food Mill for apple sauce and grape juice, a hand-crank pasta maker and the essentials to hot water bath process a year's supply of applesauce. For pizza-parlor-quality crusts, we use an oven cooking stone, and to roll our sushi and spring rolls, we

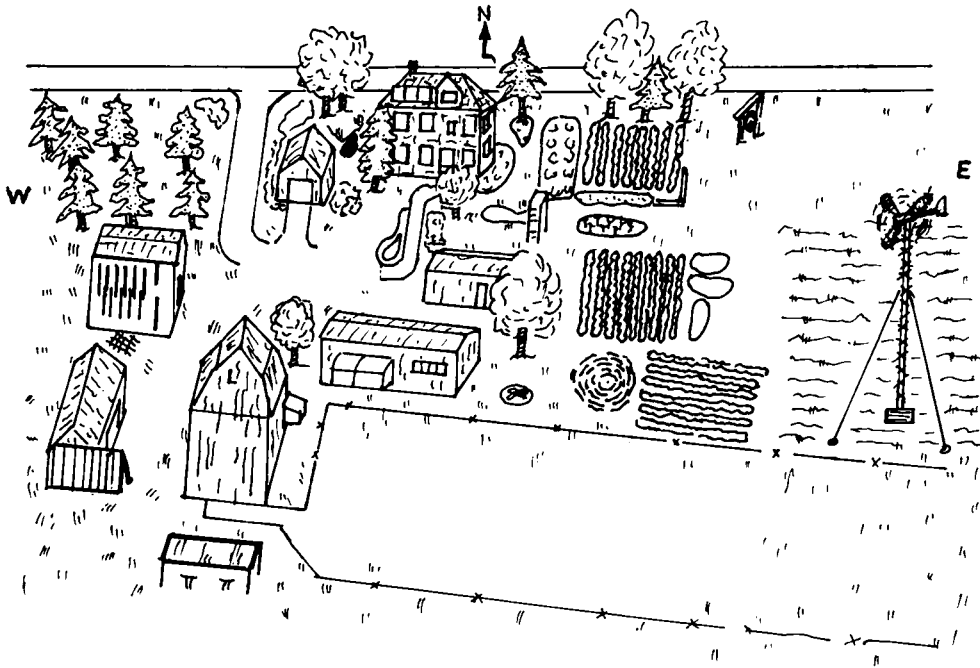
employ a bamboo sushi mat. We have a few attractive white serving dishes or platters, too; who wants to serve up soup out of a glass mixing bowl? Farmsteads aren't bachelor pads, after all.

On the high-tech end, we whip it up in a food processor or blender, fry it in a deep fryer and use a microwave to efficiently warm things. For perfect rice, every time, pick up a rice cooker; it can't get easier than this: add rice and water, then turn on; when a tune plays on our Zojiruchi Rice Cooker, it's ready (or will stay warm for when you need it). A chef's showplace or licensed commercial kitchen, our farmstead kitchen is not. We're a farmstead. Our focus is the output. Our eclectic array of tools helps us get from garden to plate.

The Return of the Farmstead

Why farmstead? Because for those wishing to reclaim sanity when it comes to providing a healthy, ecologically responsible meal for themselves or their family, we're going to need to return to our farmstead: in the city, suburb or at the end of a country lane. Our current food system is simply unsustainable: when as many as 20 calories of energy or resources goes into every 1 calorie of food nutrition that we end up eating; when government policy, like the US Farm Bill, provides cash entitlements for farmers that reward, in part, monoculture corn crops for animal feed, fuel (ethanol) and food (mostly in the form of high-fructose corn syrup used by the food processing industry); when 2 percent of the population feeds the other 98 percent.

Thomas Jefferson's agricultural ideal — a nation of yeoman farmers — is as useful an idea today as it was in 1776. What he didn't foresee, or perhaps couldn't imagine, is more than 80 percent of Americans



Inn Serendipity Farm and Bed & Breakfast. Credit: Valdek Kivirist

choosing to confine themselves to urban living and entrust their food supply to farmers and large corporate processors they'll never know, often thousands of miles away.

But today's version of yeoman farmers — unlike Jefferson's idyllic vision of the small farmer in the countryside — are picking up the hoe and planting food gardens by the hundreds of thousands, but they live in the inner cities, eat the former lawns of their McMansions-turned-food-plantations or intervene in the disease of sprawl, ruining developers' plans for growing houses on fertile farming land by purchasing these farms and renewing the rural renaissance filled with local, self-reliant, community-based enterprises.

About the Cookbook

The temptation to organize a seasonal cookbook by the seasons speaks to Spock's sense of logic. But we tend to prepare meals based first on what type of meal we're looking to make — breakfast or dinner, a snack or a refreshing beverage — then examining what we have in abundance. True, sometimes it's obvious: with 200 perfectly ripe tomatoes sitting on the counter, eat Tomato Pie (recipe page 15) for breakfast or the Fried Green Tomato and Basil Sandwich (recipe page 149) for lunch or dinner. Maybe you just received a box of fresh fruits and vegetables from your CSA, and instead of a couple of beets, you have 15. What to do? Try the Beet Burgers (recipe page 155), since they're great right out of the oven as well

as reheated after they're frozen (months later). The first eight chapters provide a collection of recipes that speak to a general classification, like drinks or bread. Both may be paired with a main dish or breakfast instead.

Eating seasonally means letting nature's abundance direct your meal plan, allowing you to serve meals that contain only the highest quality, most nutritious ingredients, sometimes harvested just minutes before you eat them if you grow a kitchen garden on your patio, rooftop or backyard. Sometimes the ingredients are so fresh, you merely need a dash of balsamic vinaigrette and a few spices to savor the subtle flavors of your first salad of the season. But after gorging on strawberries for two weeks, or if you came home from the farmers market with ten pints on special from your favorite farmer there, you can freeze them whole (see page 31 on tray freezing) and lock in nearly all the fresh fruit flavor and nutrition.

Each chapter features an introductory narrative addressing the why or how we ended up cooking the way we do. Then scattered throughout, like seeds planted in fertile soil, are informational sidebars on food storage, frugal home cooking, hosting potlucks and stocking the pantry, as well as slice-of-life profiles of farming friends or urban gardeners, kitchen canners and a vegan chef—Kitchen Table Talks—most containing a recipe to try. The final chapter is a digest version of our son's favorite recipes and

pantry-stocking specifics so you'll be prepared for even the snowiest snowstorm. Like the recipes in the Kitchen Table Talks, these recipes are easily cross-referenced throughout the other eight chapters.

The recipes in this book draw inspiration from our journeys to far-flung locales where we rediscovered the joys of cooking and sharing meals slowly in the camaraderie of others. You'll find a classic eggs Benedict recipe as well as an Indonesian-influenced peanut sauce for asparagus or a Grecian souvlaki with home-baked pitas. We celebrate the diversity of culinary influences resulting from the melting pot we know as America, featuring a New Orleans seafood gumbo and an avocado dip from a soul-food vegan chef in Oakland, California.

As for the recipes themselves, they pass the "grandmother's test." For starters, most of the recipes fit on one page and have ingredients or names you can pronounce and, usually, could find in your backyard garden or chicken coop. We're all creative, have some degree of green thumbs and can cook in the kitchen. In the case of farmstead cuisine, it's mostly harvesting, washing, chopping, cooking in a pan or oven — not brain surgery.

With this cookbook, you can eat well, save money and restore the Earth. Real food rots, so eat it fresh! And remember, there's always a place for you at our farmstead table!