

A Declaration of Food Interdependence

This issue's guest editorial is by Lisa Kivirist and John D. Ivanko and is adapted from their book, Farmstead Chef (farmsteadchef.com), which serves up recipes for homegrown and homemade cooking, sidebars on preserving the harvest and stocking the pantry, all while seeking to bring Americans back together again around the kitchen table.

America's founding fathers signed the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, affirming the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It set in motion the formation of a more perfect Union, founded upon the principles rooted in the land, in democracy, and freedom.

Thomas Jefferson, perhaps more than any other founder, recognized the importance of agriculture in the nourishment of what has become our great nation today. While he had many detractors and skeptics, he advocated for the small family farmers—and a limited federal government. From crop rotation to contour plowing, Jefferson appreciated the young nation's interdependency on the land and the fruits it provided. He is in fact responsible for the eggplant, broccoli, and brussels sprouts we eat today, having introduced them himself to American soils. He also recognized the finiteness of the continent, and called for stewardship and care.

At the time of the American Revolution, much of the population grew at least some of their own food. We were a largely agrarian nation, with inklings of the industrial greatness that would arrive in

the 20th century, albeit at a dire cost to both ecological systems and fellow humankind, impacts we're still trying to ascertain. While the U.S. abolished slavery about a century after the Revolution, much of our agricultural system still depends on exploited migrant labor, and often by illegal immigrants.

After the robber barons came the multinational corporations. Food production became the purview of a shrinking crop of increasingly large-scale farms, often operating as corporations themselves. Federal policies, especially through the Farm Bill, masked the true cost of food with producer subsidies and a highway system to move it around. By the end of the

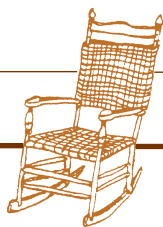
20th century, these corporations and their lobbying interests took powerful positions that helped shape the very laws that regulated their business.

Meanwhile, independence and freedom for the American people related to food and drink became largely defined by the number of food choices and the ability to earn money to pay someone else to grow or produce what we ate. Many Americans have become dependent upon the industrial food system to provide for survival. If you live in a low-income part of a city like Detroit, there may not even be a supermarket to serve you. Yet in a well-to-do suburb, there might be warehouses of food. And, because it's a food system dependent on cheap, abundant oil, so, too, is our next meal.

But those of us who shop at farmers' markets or grow some food in our gardens know that independence and happiness have much more to do with relationships and friendships than with the size of our bank account. Trust is what holds these relationships together, forged from a respect for each other and the land, and the importance of food and community in our daily lives. Both are essential to our prosperity. Food is a currency that defines healthy communities.

There are numerous examples we share in our book, *Farmstead Chef*, of ways to reconnect with real food, if not grown on your rooftop or backyard, then by purchasing directly from the growers or producers and largely side-stepping corporate America. From farmers' markets to small-scale artisanal cheesemakers, from family or cooperatively run dairies to local beekeepers, scratch the surface in





any community and there's a growing number of opportunities to buy real food directly from real people. Watch out, though. Real food rots, so eat it fresh or preserve it at its peak.

A declaration of American interdependence—among farmers and diners, city slickers and country folk, people and the land—may hold out the greatest promise and hope for tomorrow, as energy costs soar ever higher and climate change makes it snow in Mexico, flood in Australia, and leads to massive forest fires in China. Soon we may all be eating more “farmsteadarian,” not by choice but circumstance. We're in it together now on our common home: Earth.

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 one calorie of food nutrition that we end up eating; when government policy, like the U.S. Farm Bill, provides cash entitlements for farmers that reward, in part, monoculture corn crops for animal feed, fuel (ethanol), and food (often 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.

All politics are local, it's said. So, too, might it be for most of our food and drink—and energy as well. We eat what grows in abundance where we live. Same for the renewable energy we generate on-site to meet all our energy needs. When eating, the fun part is rediscovering what grows where you live and figuring out what variations of recipes will work well for your locale. We'll share a few of our recipes in a future issue.

We like to celebrate interdependency day every day with a nod in thanks to the yeoman farmer who made it possible. After all, without these farmers—perhaps yourself included—we wouldn't be around for very long. 🌱



Find It Fast!

A complete and comprehensive index to BACKHOME's first 10 years. Professionally prepared, and published by the staff of BACKHOME Magazine. Only \$10.98 plus \$1.00 shipping and handling. To get a copy for yourself or a friend, send check or money order to BACKHOME Magazine or call us at 800-992-2546.

P.O. Box 70
Hendersonville, NC 28793

Solar Connexion



Solar Connexion has been designing and installing quality photovoltaic systems for over fifteen years.



From the simple cabin retreat to the complexity of a solar-powered community, NABCP-Certified Bryan Walsh and “ask an expert” Tom Moates have the expertise you are looking for.

P.O. Box 10095, Blacksburg, VA 24062

540-961-5120

backhomesolar@moonlightsolar.com

Cobra Head Hand Cultivator

Tested by BACKHOME gardeners. The thin, sharp triangular head is firmly mounted on a curved steel neck. This uniquely shaped blade can dig, weed, cultivate, scalp, furrow, and more. Try one today.



A Great Gift Idea!

Stock No.
10-410

\$26.45 postpaid

To Place

Credit Card Orders

Call 800-992-2546

BACKHOME MERCANTILE

P.O. Box 70

Hendersonville

NC 28793

PROFIT\$ for Small Farmers!



Small Farm Today

features how-to articles on alternative crops, profitable breeds of livestock, small livestock, draft animals, poultry, vegetable and small fruit crops, aquaculture, marketing, rural/home-based businesses, equipment, gardening, wool & fiber, timber crops, rural living, and more.

The 2011 National Small Farm Trade Show & Conference

takes place on November 5-7, 2011 at the Boone County Fairgrounds in Columbia, Missouri. This is the largest small farm conference and trade show in the United States. Call for more information.

- ☐ Sample Copy — \$4.95 (\$6.95 outside U.S.)
- ☐ One Year (6 issues)—\$23.95 (\$33.95 outside U.S.)

Make checks or money orders payable to
Small Farm Today. (U.S. funds only)

OR CALL **1-800-633-2535** to use MC/Visa

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

CLIP & MAIL TO: Small Farm Today
3903 W Ridge Trail Rd, Clark MO 65243

BH