

BEATING THE WINTER TIME BLUES

BY LISA KIVIRIST AND JOHN IVANKO

Winter is a season wrapped in contradictions. Cold outside and warm inside! After the chaotic rush of the fall harvest and holiday season, we crave hibernation and cuddling with a book around the woodstove. But by the time we pack the tinsel after the holidays, the groundhog reminds us we still have a long stretch of winter to go and cabin fever hits. The looming weeks before we can get back into our growing fields can feel like an eternity.

But don't despair! A dash of freshness can thaw wintertime blues. Here's how we break free and enjoy those slower weeks leading up to the flurry of spring activity:

1. **PURGE:** Undoubtedly there's something in your house right now that could use an ambush purge. Create some needed breathing space by decluttering, donating or freecycling your old stuff. You'll feel like you lost ten pounds instantaneously. Top areas that could probably use a purge: kitchen drawers, bathroom cabinets, clothing closets.

2. **REKINDLE:** Now is the time to revive and finish projects that have been floating half-mast for a while, things we started with good intentions and never had time to finish. To keep from getting overwhelmed, just pick one thing to complete. Finish that cross-stitch project, paint the bathroom, or add sten-

cils to the hallway. We rekindle cooking ideas misplaced on the back-burner, such as making homemade yogurt or perfecting our sourdough bread. Or get that beer brewing in anticipation of summertime parties and potlucks.

3. **EXPOSE:** Depending on where you live, you may need to bury under layers of clothing this time of year, but we can still think of ways to expose and open up our mind to new perspectives. Our farmsteadchef.com website offers ideas of books to read, movie documentaries to watch—like “King Corn”—or organizations leading

the way to a healthier food system for all.

4. **PLAY:** Sprinkle some silly into your day with an unexpected surprise. Garner giggles from your kids by serving popcorn for breakfast, setting up camping gear in the living room for a fun sleep-over or hosting a “soup night” like the Carus family does in our town (a “Kitchen Table Talk” in *Farmstead Chef*) by getting three pots of soup going and inviting over friends. Or play with your food with an evening making pasta from scratch.

The above article is adapted by the authors from themes found in *Rural Renaissance*, ECOpreneuring's latest cookbook, *Farmstead Chef* (farmsteadchef.com), filled with stories and recipes to nourish and inspire.

