

Backwoods

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Home magazine

practical ideas for self-reliant living

**Earn a living
from home**

DUFFY'S
GENERAL
STORE

**Catch wild yeast
and make
sourdough
bread**

**Raising meat rabbits
Foraging wild food
Build an outhouse
Brewing beer**

Don Childers

Publisher's Note

Thankful for *Backwoods Home Magazine*

As COVID-19 has swept across the U.S. the past few months, I'm increasingly aware of the toll inflicted on small businesses. Being a small business owner, I sympathize greatly with those who are facing bankruptcy after years of hard work. Since my business primarily deals with customers over the phone, by mail, or on our website, we haven't been adversely affected by the virus or lockdown. In fact, we've seen a substantial increase in subscribers who are looking to become more self-reliant.

Our office is fairly spread-out, and with a few basic precautions we are able to stay open in relative safety. Our three office ladies and I each have our own comfortable spaces, the large editorial area is separate from them, and the book shipping area is at the back of the building. My parents, Dave and Ilene Duffy, who are important to both the business and editorial sides of the magazine, are in the 'at risk' age range for COVID-19 so are sequestered at their home and only come into the office after hours. The managing editor, my sister Annie Tuttle, is also sequestered at her home as she has underlying lung issues.

All editors have workstations at their homes that we've updated with programs like Zoom, so we hold our editorial meetings in real time. The only thing we can't do effectively is have office parties. I am thankful for the position my business and family are in right now. This crisis makes the risks of owning a small business clear.

On the newsstand

Last issue marked the first issue of *BHM*'s return to the newsstand since we withdrew from it two years ago during our brief transition to a digital-only publication. Our timing may have been slightly off since the issue hit the shelves of *Tractor Supply*, *Coastal Farm Supply*, and *Wilco* at the beginning of the pandemic.



In this issue

I hope you'll like this issue. We have a few more articles than usual in our *Making a Living* category. Maybe they'll help you get the juices flowing if you're trying to figure out a way to make some money while you're waiting for your job to come back or are looking for another revenue stream. Even our *Farm and Garden* category talks about selling what you grow.

We're also still discussing the pandemic in this issue. Dr. Joe Alton asks where the virus came from in his article, *How did COVID-19 originate?* And John Silveira explores our response to the pandemic in his *Last Word* column, *The unintended consequences of the lockdown*. My Dad examines the pandemic from a more personal angle in his column, *My View*, on page 7. — **Sam Duffy**



The Backwoods Home Magazine office — BHM founder Dave Duffy watches Crew Dragon astronauts on an office monitor during a break in activity.

My view

I never got to say goodbye to Dad or my uncle, but I have no regrets

One of the tragic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic has been the inability by many to say goodbye to their loved ones as they lost their lives to the virus. It was mainly the result of policy guidance issued by the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) and the CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services) to nursing homes and long-term care facilities where many of the deaths took place. Visitors and anyone else who weren't "essential staff" were barred; they were advised to stay in touch with their elderly loved ones through computer platforms like Zoom, FaceTime, and Skype. The guidance is now being relaxed somewhat, sometimes allowing end-of-life visits by relatives.

It brought back memories of my father when he died of cancer 56 years ago. I was 20 and he was 57, and I raced to the hospital to see him because I knew he was dying. I had been at home caring for my mom, who was also ill, and my brother had come home from the hospital so I could get my turn to say goodbye. But I got there too late. He died minutes before I came into his room. All I could do was kiss him and hold his hand and talk softly to his lifeless body. It was very hard not being able to say goodbye, and for years I felt I had let him down. I can only imagine in my nightmares how hard it must have been for Dad.

And although the pandemic has highlighted this tragic end-of-life situation where loved ones cannot be with a dying parent, throughout history it has happened on a regular basis, whether from wars or sudden heart attacks. At age 15 my wife was denied the ability to say goodbye to her 52-year-old Dad when a fatal heart attack took him. She has talked about him often, from the perspective of a young girl with a true hero for a Dad.

Forty years after my Dad died, his brother, age 99, lay dying at a care facility. He had been asking me to visit him for the previous couple of years. We weren't close like my Dad and me, but we were close enough. My excuse for not visiting him before he died was the inconvenient cross-country plane trip, plus a relative told me my uncle had mild dementia and may not recognize me anyway. A few months after he died, another relative told me my uncle had clung to life for days after he was expected to die. "He said he was waiting for you to come see him," she told me. You can imagine how I felt.

But I've justified not saying goodbye to both my father and my uncle. My justification rests on the fact that during their lifetimes I was a friend to them, and I was honest and kind and respectful. I had no regrets about my relationship

with either man. As important as it is to say goodbye, it's even more important to have been an honest friend while they lived.

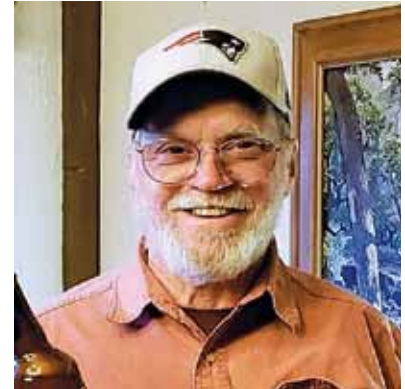
We take a lot of stuff for granted, including our relationships with our parents, siblings, children, and friends. It takes a pandemic to make us realize these relationships are all temporary. Time marches relentlessly forward, kids grow up and move, our health changes, and once-in-a-hundred-year events (like a pandemic) occur.

Wouldn't it be nice to get a carefree hug from your grandkid right about now. How about a casual visit from a neighbor we only see occasionally. Look at all the family visits and vacations we've had to put off without much notice. We did all these things without a thought before; now we take tentative steps toward those we love the most.

The other day while reading the news I came across a photo of children in a playground. Each child sat on the asphalt inside a rectangle drawn with chalk, while the teacher, wearing a face mask, talked to them from a standing position. The kids were not looking so much at the teacher as they were at each other. Their body language easily revealed their eagerness to play with each other.

The headline over the photo blared, "*Is this the new normal,*" obscenely suggesting the impossible scenario of children being unable to make contact during playtimes of the future. We hear that phrase, "the new normal," often these days. But it's all backward! It's not "the new normal" we fear but "the old normal" we are fearful of returning to. My generation is the first to emerge from "the old normal" of constant deadly and debilitating diseases plaguing humanity. We emerged into "the new normal" when we defeated poliovirus in my youth, and when we eradicated smallpox in 1980 when I was 36. We have been living "the new normal" and we're not going to give it up. A vaccine is just around the corner for this coronavirus, and not only will we be up and running as a healthy society soon, but our renewed energy will kick our economy into overdrive.

Life is a wonderful thing. Out of the abyss we came to enjoy it, and someday into the abyss we'll return. But as a human being, let's endeavor to live and die on our terms. Put regrets and missed opportunities aside, and stop taking for granted all the wonderful relationships life offers us. Once this pandemic is behind us, let's make sure we live as honest friends with those we love. — *Dave Duffy*



Sourdoughsimplified

By Jim Capossela

I'm not a movie buff but one could imagine that you wouldn't have to watch too many John Wayne movies before seeing old Duke sitting around a campfire (scolding someone?) with a large cast-iron pot suspended colorfully over some hot coals. If you could have peeked inside, you might well have seen a batch of sourdough biscuits or a loaf of sourdough bread baking. Although compressed yeast became available in the mid nineteenth century, it's fair to assume that on the frontier, it wasn't always at hand. But what was and is always available is the yeast in the air all around us. It simply needs to be captured by a slurry of flour and water that will become a starter or "mother." This living starter containing natural yeast was transported from campsite to campsite, or from cattle drive to cattle drive, much as more ancient people would transport a live coal to start the next fire. Even if you're planning to skip the next cattle drive, you can make your own starter and craft the exact same baked goods that helped settle the old west or feed the speculators in the California and Klondike gold rushes.

But a lot of people make sourdough more complicated than it has to be. My approaches to both creating a starter and baking with it might be seen as heretical by some professional bakers and certain purists, especially in regard to the fact that I usually add commercial yeast for extra boost. But I've enjoyed sourdough breads, biscuits, rolls, pancakes, waffles, and even jelly doughnuts for decades and have never wanted for more flavor or richness than my methods yield.



Early morning breakfast on the patio with sourdough biscuits and coffee

The rap against supplemental commercial yeast (or even chemical leaveners) goes like this: it's so potent that it overwhelms the natural yeast while at the same time making the bread rise too quickly, which prevents full development of that distinctive sourdough flavor. This argument has merit, but there's a hole in it. Once you've repeatedly fed your starter and baked with it many times, I believe the commercial yeast you began with is displaced by the natural yeast in the air and in the flour, since commercial yeast does not do well in the acidic environment of a sourdough slurry. In this fashion, your starter sort of "purifies" itself naturally. But what about adding commercial yeast in the actual recipes? Committed professionals and no doubt some serious at-home bakers who really care about their product often omit the commercial yeast, (but not always,

keep reading) but I've found that that can make for very long rise times and unpredictable outcomes. Professional bakers not only bake constantly, in great ovens, but also have access to a wide range of flours that are very important in determining how a loaf will turn out. Then, too, professional bakers often do add commercial yeast to help out those heavier breads made with whole grains, or that incorporate nuts, fruit, olives, or various herbs.

Using my simpler approaches will yield excellent results without the unpredictability and the rise times that can stretch to two or even three days, with rounds of "retarding" in between. That said, it doesn't have to be either/or. Now and then when ambition moves me, I make a couple of traditional round country loaves or "boules" with no added yeast. These are always two-day breads where the loaves are held back in

the refrigerator overnight to slow the ferment, then put out and set to rise again the following day. I keep my fingers crossed that the loaves rise enough without them overproofing. Sometimes it works out.

You can make whole wheat or rye starters but these directions are for a white-flour starter, the one most typically used. No problem adding whole wheat flour to the recipe, though.

Making sourdough starter

In a large bowl, put two cups of unbleached all-purpose flour, one teaspoon of salt, three tablespoons of sugar, and one envelope of dry yeast. Stir well.

Add two cups of warm water, about 105° F, stir well. Leave lightly covered (I like cheesecloth) at room temperature for 24 hours. Then, add a half-cup of flour and a little less than that of lukewarm water — about 78 degrees from now on. Repeat this 24 hours later. In another day, you should have a yeasty starter that has the consistency of a very thick batter, but one that would pour if you tipped the vessel. I use a clear plastic container with an easily removable top, one where just the end opens if you wish it to be (see photo). Many bakers use glass or ceramic vessels to store their starters.

Don't let anyone tell you you can't use plastic. I once kept a starter alive and healthy for 20 years in a clear, rigid plastic vessel almost identical to the one in the photo. Do not use metal, although some say stainless steel is OK.

You can begin to use this starter for simply made items like biscuits or pancakes. I don't though. I want to build the starter a little. After the first 48 hours, I put the starter in the refrigerator (probably not strictly necessary in the building stage), lid down if there is a lid. I leave the lid just slightly ajar to let the inevitable gases of fermentation escape, although I'm dubious that this is really necessary.



I store my starter in this clear, rigid plastic container of a type I've used successfully for years. Entire lid can be easily removed as necessary.



Whole wheat sourdough bread after first rise

The next day, I take it out, leave it on the counter for two hours, then add about a third cup of flour and a little less than that of lukewarm water. Each time it is fed, I leave it on the counter partially uncovered so that it will pick up natural yeast that is in the air.

I'm told that the more you bake, the more of those invisible yeast spores will be in your kitchen, not just in the air but on surfaces. According to the scientists, over time, as different strains of yeast are gathered in, the complexity of the starter and

therefore the baked goods increases. Each time you feed it, it should start to bubble, as the yeast feed on the new flour being introduced. The fermentation of the sugars in the flour by the yeast combines with chemical reactions by the beneficial bacteria (which are also everywhere) to produce the famous sourdough flavor. As alcohol is a by-product of fermentation, a thin layer of lightly colored alcohol will accumulate on top of the starter if you leave it be for a spell. I've heard that this is where the term "hooch" came from. Maybe it's what



Sourdough pancakes baking on a 75-year-old Coleman stove. What stories that stove could tell. This batch shows the pancake color to aim for.

got John Wayne pumped up for his frequent orations? Actually, it's said to be undrinkable, but it does clue you in that you're not feeding your starter often enough. I've sometimes stirred it back in but many authorities advise that you simply tip it out at feeding time.

The seven-day preparation of course also builds volume. Then, you're ready to create your own compliment-winning recipes or try those that follow.

If you don't bake regularly, take your starter out at least twice or three times a week and feed it: two hours on the counter, then a half cup or less each of flour and water. Leave out for several hours, then return to the refrigerator where the yeast will remain alive but dormant. If you do plan to bake, take the starter out at suppertime, and just before bedtime feed it as just described. The next morning it will be bubbly and ready for use. Every so often, empty the vessel and clean out the harmless solids that accumulate around the sides.

Some bakers go to extraordinary lengths in caring for their starter, feeding it not just once a day but even

more often. I've no doubt that some play classical music for their starter, or write poetry to it. I haven't yet heard of a funeral held for a starter that died, but it's bound to have happened.

Sourdough pancakes:

Serves 3

Can you envision a pancake batter made without milk? Well, here it is, and these are the lightest pancakes I've ever had. I've made them dozens of times in campgrounds, and often at home, too. In a camp setting, when it's chilly, I'll take the starter in a small container into the sleeping bag with me. Make sure the lid fits tightly!

Specifically because of this recipe, I make my starter a little thicker than some to compensate for the thinning caused by the water.

2 cups sourdough starter
1 egg
2 Tbsp. sugar
3 Tbsp. vegetable oil
1 Tbsp. melted butter
1 tsp. baking soda
3 Tbsp. lukewarm water

1. Heat your griddle to moderately hot. You'll test it, as described.

2. Mix the starter, egg, sugar, oil, and butter in a bowl and whisk until well blended.

3. In a cup or small bowl, dissolve the soda in the water. Stir and add to the other bowl. You want to work quickly now when the leavening effect of the soda is at its peak.

4. Grease the griddle lightly with a dab of butter or a tiny bit of oil. Griddle temperature is key to good pancakes. Always do a test pancake. If it looks like it should, go ahead and make your batch. Too hot a griddle will ruin this delicate pancake, more so than some others. I like a lightly mottled brown finish. Leftovers? Slather each pancake with a little jelly, roll up in foil, and use as a trail snack.

Sourdough biscuits:

Makes 8

I don't often make biscuits, since the very soft flour needed to make the best biscuits is not readily available in my area. But when I made this fairly new recipe with standard flour, it pleasantly surprised me, twice. First, it rose quite nicely and was tender, and it also reheated very well after having been frozen. One tip with this recipe is not to make the biscuits too thin. I actually measure the thickness. The diameter is less important.

1½ cups all-purpose flour
½ - ¾ tsp. salt
¼ tsp. baking soda
2 tsp. baking powder
4 Tbsp. cold butter, cut into eight pieces
½ cup sourdough starter
About ½ - ⅔ cup churned buttermilk, divided

1. Combine the flour, salt, baking soda, and baking powder in a large bowl.

2. Using a pastry blender (ideal) or two knives (far from ideal), cut the butter into the flour mixture until it

resembles coarse crumbs. Do not use a food processor. Preheat oven to 400° F and line a baking pan with parchment; if no parchment, lightly grease the pan.

3. In a smaller bowl, combine the starter and ¼ cup of buttermilk. Stir this into the dry mixture. Turn over a few times. Slowly add more buttermilk as needed to make a sticky



dough that is starting to hold together. Turn out onto a floured surface and gather into a ball, incorporating more flour or water as necessary to make a coherent mass; then knead for a minute or two until you have a smooth, somewhat elastic dough.

4. Pat out to ⅝ inch thick. Using a three-inch round cutter, cut into circles, placing each cutout on the prepared pan, with the edges of the cutouts touching. I use what's called a flan ring, but you can use a cut-out tuna fish can or even a bottle top. **Important:** Don't twist as you cut as this inhibits the dough from rising. Let rest for 30 minutes. Biscuits will puff up a little, but most of the rising will be in the oven (this is called oven spring). Bake for about 15 minutes. The tops should be golden brown. Serve at once. Good split with butter and jelly.

If you wrap tightly, they will be OK next day if warmed.



Cutting the biscuits and just out of the oven. These rise a good deal.

Whole-wheat sourdough bread:

Makes two 8½ x 4½-inch loaves

This should really be called “part-whole-wheat bread.” It is sensational toasted and spread with butter and maple syrup. For a denser loaf, you can increase the percentage of whole wheat flour. I make the directions very precise for the help of persons who are not accustomed to baking bread. Like to impress your camp-mates? Try it in your Dutch oven.

1½ cups sourdough starter
4½ cups all-purpose unbleached bread flour
1 cup whole wheat flour
1 Tbsp. plus 1 tsp. sugar
1¾ tsp. salt
1 tsp. baking soda
1 envelope dry yeast
½ cup warm water (about 105 degrees)
2 cups lukewarm water
½ cup additional flour (either flour)

1. Reactivate the starter as described in the above discussion.

2. In a very large bowl, combine the flours, sugar, salt, and soda. Stir well.

3. Proof the yeast: Put it into a small bowl and add the ½ cup warm water and a pinch each of sugar and flour. Stir a few times. Let sit until bubbly, about 10 - 15 minutes.

4. To the bowl with the flours, add the proofed yeast mixture, the starter, and the two cups of lukewarm water (78 degrees). Stir well with a stout wooden spoon. Spread part of the additional ½ cup of flour on the counter and turn the dough out onto it. You want to use all of this ½ cup so add more water as necessary to balance it out and get the consistency you want.

5. Knead the dough for a minute or two. Slap it down hard on the counter and then let it rest for 15 minutes. (Called autolysis, this gives time for the starch molecules to absorb the moisture. If you add too much water right away, you could get past the



Whole wheat sourdough bread after baking, now cooling on racks

point where the flour can ultimately absorb it.

Autolysis lets you better gauge how much water you must use.) Resume kneading and knead for at least five minutes, until the dough is smooth and elastic. Again, it should be just on the edge of sticking to the counter. Dry doughs make dry breads.

6. Clean and oil the large bowl. Place the dough into it and turn it so that it is very lightly coated with the oil. Cover with a cloth and place in a warm place for about 45 minutes to one hour, or until doubled in size. Do not overproof.

7. Grease and flour the baking pans; I prefer glass.

8. Punch the dough down and divide it in half. Lightly stretch each half until it is a little longer than the pan then tuck those ends back underneath the dough. Place in the pan

and cover with a cloth. Put pans in a warm spot free of drafts and let rise until double, about one hour. (Rising times will vary.) Half way through, preheat your oven to 390° F.

9. Place the two pans on the middle rack of the oven spaced at least two inches apart. Bake for about 40 minutes or until a cake tester inserted in the middle comes out clean. Cool in the pan a few minutes. Use a very thin knife to cut around the edge if the loaf seems stuck (this loaf does not seem to stick).

Turn onto cooling racks to cool fully.

For storage: Wrap tightly and use at room temperature within two or three days. After that, slice and freeze. Freezes perfectly.

The next two recipes are only a little more challenging, but not all

that time consuming once you've prepared the starter as discussed.

Sourdough apple muffins:

Makes about 14

I like making this with the wild apples that I forage in great quantities when it's a good year, which, alas, it isn't always. Use any apple you wish if you're buying. I've never made a reduced-sugar muffin that I actually enjoyed.

Don't tell anyone but I might use a whole cup of sugar! (My glucose is always around 90.)

2 cups all-purpose flour
½ - ⅔ cup sugar
2 tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. salt
¾ tsp. cinnamon
1 egg
½ cup sourdough starter
⅔ cup milk or soy milk
⅓ cup vegetable oil
About one medium apple (see below)
¾ cup chopped walnuts, or other nuts

1. Combine the flour, sugar, baking powder, salt, and cinnamon in a large bowl.

2. Heat your oven to 390° F, not hotter. Line a standard 12-cup muffin tin with paper or foil liners.

3. In a medium size bowl, whisk the egg then add the starter, milk, and oil.

Stir well. Add three-fourths of this mixture to the flour mixture and stir.

4. Wash and core the apple but do not peel. Grate it using the grating blade of the food processor. If you grate by hand, you'll have to grate right into acidulated water because of immediate oxidation. Squeeze all the water out of the grated apple using paper towels or a dish towel then measure out one cup not packed. Immediately add to the main bowl along with the nuts. Now add the rest of the liquid ingredients as necessary to make a stiff batter which is actually more like a soft but spoonable dough that will not pour.



Batch of waffles ready for butter and jelly

5. Fill the liners nearly full and bake for about 20-22 minutes. Cool on racks for 10 minutes then serve. Freezes perfectly.

Sourdough hickory nut waffles:

Makes five 7½-inch round waffles

The real challenge with this recipe is understanding your waffle iron and its characteristics. Thickness of the batter and cooking times are not too flexible.

In this original recipe, refined over numerous trials, I especially like to use wild hickory nuts. It's hard to come up with any quantity of this difficult-to-crack nut, but all you need here is three tablespoons. However you can use any nut.

Cook these slightly well done; some irons have a heat setting which helps.

If you don't think this is the most delicious waffle you've ever tasted you can write me a letter, but I won't hold my breath waiting for it.

3 Tbsp. hickory nuts, toasted if you wish
1 cup sourdough starter
1 large egg, beaten
¼ cup mild vegetable oil, such as safflower
About ½ cup whole milk, divided
1 tsp. grated orange peel (optional, but do not increase)
½ cup all-purpose flour
1 tsp. baking powder
⅛ tsp. baking soda
¼ tsp. salt
3 Tbsp. sugar
1 Tbsp. wheat germ (optional)
A little vegetable oil

1. Toast the nuts in a small, dry pan if desired. Do not brown.

Cool slightly, then chop or grind fine. Reserve.

2. In a medium size bowl, combine the starter, egg, oil, and half of the milk. Whisk to combine. Then add the orange peel.

3. In a large bowl, combine the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, sugar, wheat germ, and nuts. Preheat your waffle iron.

4. Add the wet ingredients to the dry and stir quickly to combine. Add only enough additional milk to end up with a batter that spreads of its own accord on the iron. Because starters will vary in consistency, the quantity of milk needed is an approximation. The starter, of course, provides part of both the liquid and the flour.

5. Very lightly brush the waffle iron with vegetable oil; a pastry brush works well. Repeat this between waffles.

6. The quantity of batter is critical but cannot be stated since waffle irons vary in size and shape. My round iron takes a half cup. Pour the batter onto the hot iron and if necessary gently use a rubber spatula to nudge the batter to very close to the edge of the iron. When you close the iron, the batter will spread outwards a little more.

7. My waffles are done perfectly in three and a half minutes on medium-high. Follow the directions that came with your iron or just learn by experience. Err if you have to by cooking a little too long; if you open the iron too soon you'll have a soggy mess and then you'll have to cool the iron, clean it, and start all over. Also, if you undercook this waffle it will be a little soggy.

8. Counterintuitively, the waffle will soften rather than harden as it sits in the open air. That's why, if you don't eat them literally immediately, waffles must be toasted to restore that just-out-of-the-iron crispness. Δ

Capturing wild yeast

A homestead harvest out of thin air

By Dawn Lamoureux-Crocker

There are a multitude of microscopic organisms that are ever-present in nearly every environment on Earth. Amongst these un-seen organisms are yeasts and bacteria that hold the key to developing a sourdough starter that is unique to your locale.

The bubbling culture of wild yeast is an amazing micro-environment that replenishes itself and, unlike other foods that may spoil within a week's time, sourdough cultures can be sustained for decades with proper nurturing. Sourdough starters are unique to their location and their flavors are influenced by the microbes present. This results in a bread with a distinct flavor and texture specific to your homestead. Although capturing wild yeast to make sourdough has many positive attributes it also comes with its disadvantages. The primary drawback is the time intensive pro-

cess that is involved to grow and care for your starter. Additionally, making a loaf of sourdough bread is a lengthy process that can easily take up to a day. However, once you taste a home

baked loaf of your own sourdough bread using your home grown and harvested starter, you may find it difficult to appreciate traditional bread ever again.



A healthy sourdough starter forms bubbles at the top.



Establishing and maintaining a sourdough starter is relatively simple and, in my opinion, an essential component of a modern homestead kitchen. Capturing wild yeast from the thin air can be achieved by setting a “trap” using a simple flour and water mixture. This mixture is left out covered with a thin cloth in an area of your homestead that has a warm, stable temperature. After a few days, microbes that are present in the surrounding environment will fall prey to the starchy mixture. You will know your “trap” is successful when bubbles begin forming on the surface of the mixture. Once these microbes establish a colony they quickly proliferate and your harvest can begin. Do not despair if your starter may take up to five days or more to show any signs of life. Weather and environmental conditions will play a factor in the culturing and harvest time frame.

Making a starter:

Glass, plastic, or stoneware container with a loose lid (consider expansion and make certain you have a large enough jar)

Wooden spoon

Cotton dish cloth

Flour

Water

Starboard Farm sourdough starter:

1 cup unbleached flour

1 cup lukewarm water

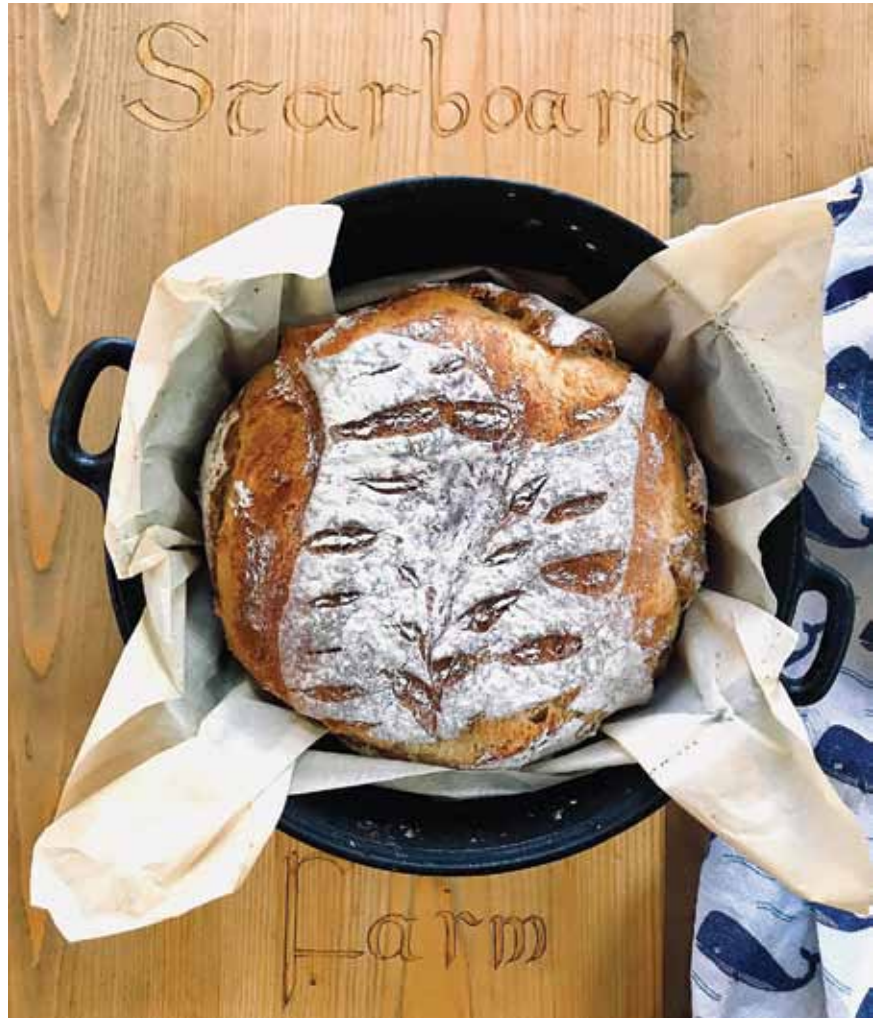
1 Tbsp. of raw honey

Day 1

Start your culture by adding the flour, water, and honey to your container and mix. Lay the cotton dish cloth over the top and allow it to sit on the counter or a safe warm spot (at least 70 degrees) in your home for 24 hours.

Day 2

After 24 hours you should see tiny bubbles forming on top of the mix-



Starboard Farm's shepherd's sourdough boule

ture. This is a positive sign your trap is working. Stir the mixture with the wooden spoon and cover again with the cloth.

Day 3

After 72 hours you will feed your starter. Measure another cup of flour and water and add to the starter and stir with a wooden spoon until the mixture is smooth.

Day 4

Your starter should be very bubbly and the volume should be doubled. At this stage you should detect a noticeably sour or tangy aroma coming from the container. Feed your starter with another cup of flour and water and stir with a wooden spoon until smooth.

Day 5

Today you should be ready for your first harvest. Before you do, make certain that your harvest is “ripe.” To test your mixture take a small amount of starter and drop it into a glass of water. If it floats, it is ready to use. If it sinks, give the starter a few additional days and continue feeding.

Maintaining your starter

If you decide to add sourdough recipes to your weekly baking regimen, discard half of the sourdough mixture and continue to feed it using the same amount of flour and water daily. If you feel you will be an occasional sourdough baker you can store the starter in the fridge with a tight lid

and feed it once a week. When you are ready to use again remove from the refrigerator and bring to room temperature. You may have to feed it for a few days to bring it back to life.

Troubleshooting

Capturing, using, and maintaining a colony of wild yeast is bound to come with its own set of problems. If your starter does not form bubbles by the third day start a new batch and try moving the jar to a new location. Make certain the temperature is stable and not too cool. Your starter may look moldy, have a strange colored tinge, or it just plain smells bad. If this is the case, throw it out and begin again. Overcoming these challenges will bring delicious reward so do not give up!

Starboard Farm shepherd's sourdough boule:

This a very easy and basic bread with excellent texture and good tangy taste. It's a farm favorite with warm stews on a cold winter evening.

1 cup wild yeast sourdough starter
1¾ cups lukewarm water
2 cups organic unbleached white flour
¼ cup honey
1 tsp. salt
6 Tbsp. softened butter
5 cups of a combination of whole wheat and unbleached white flour (or enough to make a dough that is smooth and elastic, not sticky)

1. In a large pottery or glass bowl combine the starter with 1¾ cups lukewarm water and 2 cups unbleached white flour. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and leave in a warm area overnight.

2. The following day add the honey, salt, and softened butter and beat well. Gradually begin to add the flour a cup at a time until the dough is stiff and pulls away from the sides of the bowl. Turn out the dough on a floured surface and knead until soft and elastic. If it is still sticky, continue to add small amounts of flour. Place the



A good sourdough starter provides excellent texture and a good tangy flavor.

dough in a buttered bowl and cover with a kitchen towel. Place bowl in a warm spot and let rise until doubled in bulk.

3. Punch the dough down and turn out onto a lightly floured surface, knead the dough for a few minutes and divide into two pieces. Form the dough into two rounds and cover with a dish towel. Allow to rise a second time until doubled.

4. Pre-heat oven to 450° F and place a 3-5 quart cast iron Dutch oven in the oven while pre-heating. Heating the Dutch oven creates a steam situation within the pot that gives the sourdough the traditional outer crust and delicate interior. After 25-30 min-

utes remove Dutch oven from heat and generously brush inside of pot with olive oil. Gently transfer one of the dough pieces to Dutch oven, cover, and bake for 30 minutes. After 30 minutes, remove lid and continue baking for 10-15 minutes. After the first loaf is removed, re-oil the pan and place back in the oven for about 10 minutes to bring the temperature of the Dutch oven back up to the necessary baking temperature before baking the second loaf. Cool and slice. Serve with butter or cheese. Δ



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Mid-season planting

By Jackie Clay-Atkinson

As the saying goes “Life happens...” Maybe events have kept you from getting your garden planted early in the spring. When we moved to New Mexico, it was in late June and the homestead we’d bought had not had a garden planted in decades. But I still needed a garden so I could can up plenty of food for winter.

Or maybe you planted a great garden, but a huge hail storm came and it was wiped out the first week in July. Or the cows got in and ate your garden all up. Maybe you have a modest-

sized garden and need to grow more food than it will allow.

There’s a cure for all of these problems. Just don’t give up!

Most folks seem to think they simply must get their garden planted by a certain date, whether that’s Mother’s Day, Memorial Day, or the first of June. But that’s not carved in stone! Here are a couple of examples.

Carrots and potatoes

Most packs of carrot seed and many seed catalogs say “plant as soon as the soil can be worked in the spring.” So people rush out and plant carrot seed in cold soil just because baby

carrots can take cold and frost. I did that for years, but then I got smarter. One year I was delayed in planting due to family emergencies. It was the end of June and I still hadn’t planted my carrots! We sure depend on carrots to eat fresh and enjoy canned up to add to many meals during the winter.

I tilled the spot where I wanted the carrots and carefully planted three rows. The soil was toasty warm and it had just rained. I’ll swear those carrots sprouted in four days, coming up lusty and strong. They weren’t the fragile, thin little carrot sprouts I was familiar with. In a week they



Although it has frozen outside, our hoop houses let us harvest longer season crops in warmth.



Early tomatoes like these Moravsky Divs only take about 55 days to mature from a transplant, so if you can't start plants early, start them later and harvest plump tomatoes anyway.

had two sets of ferny true leaves and they just took off. I was so impressed I don't ever plant early carrots anymore. Instead, I plant in late June and also plant a row in August for fresh eating in late fall.

Then there was the time we planted our potatoes in early June. It was a rainy, cool spring and those potatoes mostly sprouted and just sat there. One day in early July I was at our local feed mill and the owner gave me a couple big burlap sacks of seed potatoes to "feed to the pigs." Sure they'd sprouted some and were a bit shriveled. But they were nice, big, fat potatoes and I couldn't resist planting them. So on the Fourth of July, husband Will, son David, and I planted those potatoes. I figured maybe I'd get a few little "new" potatoes to can up.

Like my carrots, those potatoes just shot up and made lusty vines. We dutifully hilled them twice and wondered if there were actually any potatoes under those vines when they flowered. (I was too chicken to look.)

Come fall, we dug our first planted potatoes and harvested two bushels of nicely sized ones from all five rows. Then we moved to the batch from the feed mill. I stuck the potato fork in next to the first hill and gave a heave. Out rolled six or seven potatoes larger than my fist. David got



A few of our potatoes harvested from those planted on July 4th

down and uncovered a few more in the same hill, all nice, big, fat potatoes! Hooray! All, in all, we dug over 500 pounds of beautiful potatoes from scruffy seed potatoes planted on the Fourth of July.

So if circumstances dictate, you don't have to be down-hearted because you couldn't plant until late June or early July (depending on your climate, of course!). Just plant and take care of those potatoes, weeding, watering, and hilling them as needed. They may just surprise you like mine did!

Late planted early tomatoes

It may seem strange to talk about planting tomatoes late in the season but if it's your only option for one reason or another, you can get away with it if you are careful to choose very early, yet productive and tasty tomato varieties. Many will bear a crop within 55 or 65 days with good care.

So even if you can't get your garden in early, get some tomato plants started two months before you figure you can plant so you'll be ready to get at it as soon as possible. Some early varieties that have performed



After an early crop is harvested, such as this lettuce, another crop can be planted in its place.



When a killing frost is expected, we harvest all of our tomatoes, even the green ones. Green tomatoes can ripen in the house or can be used for pickles and relishes or mock apple pie.

very well for us include Moravsky Div, Early Rouge, Roza, Tanana, Oregon Spring, and Sophie's Choice. All will produce nice tomatoes within 60 days with good care.

Sometimes late planting will help you escape Early Blight as well as giving you a nice fall crop to enjoy fresh and preserve in a myriad of ways.

Those green tomatoes are a "crop" as well. Yes, the larger ones can be picked ahead of a killing frost and brought into the house to ripen. You don't have to wrap them in newspaper and don't set them in a sunny window. If you wrap them, you can't tell if they're trying to rot and in a sunny window they often will rot instead of ripening.

But you'll still have plenty of other green tomatoes that are just too immature to ripen. These are not a waste! Out of green tomatoes, you can make several varieties of pickles and relishes that are very tasty. My favorite use is cutting them up and using them to bake "apple" pie and crisps. Don't peel them. Just cut them up and use just as if they were apples. I'll swear you won't be able to tell the difference. So even if your new homestead doesn't have apple trees in production, this is a great way to still enjoy apple baked goods.

Succession crops

Just because you plant a certain crop in one spot, it doesn't have to stay there all growing season. Many times we have an early season crop such as radishes, peas, or lettuce that we use during the early spring. But then the peas are gone, the radishes and lettuce are getting strong tasting or bitter. Yank them up and plant something else that will benefit you.

For instance, many snap beans will produce their crop in 55 days or a little more. And they'll do that right up until frost. Likewise, there are many other heat-loving crops you can plant when the cool season crops have

finished. There are early sweet corn varieties, rutabagas, kale, Swiss chard, cucumbers, summer squash, and others who will gladly gift your family with lots of good eating if you'll just take the time to plant them. I often start broccoli and cauliflower in late June or early July so I'll have a fall crop to enjoy and preserve. We love dehydrated broccoli and use cauliflower in our end-of-the-garden pickles.

Many herbs make a good, quick, succession crop. My favorites are basil and oregano. We not only use these fresh out of the garden but I snip off the stems and dehydrate the leaves for use over winter.

I don't like to leave a bare spot in the garden during the growing season, trying to keep something always in production or just planted for later production.

Cut and come again crops

There are many vegetables that will keep coming again and again after you carefully harvest them. Among these are spinach, Swiss chard, kale, late-planted lettuce during cool fall



These carrots were not planted as soon as the soil can be worked up, as is the usual suggestion. They were planted June 27th.

months, and broccoli which produces abundant, tasty side shoots.

Cut off the whole plant or harvest the largest leaves first. Don't pull the plants, but cut them off just above ground level and they'll come back (for broccoli, just cut off the side shoots).

Mid-summer plantings of root crops

Some crops actually do wonderfully when planted way later than you'd imagine. Among these are root crops for winter storage. As I've said, we've had great luck planting carrots mid-summer. But we also plant a nice batch of kohlrabi and two or three varieties of turnips for fall storage. There's an old saying "plant your turnips by the 27th of July, wet or dry..." And there's a lot in that saying. Spring planted turnips often turn woody and strong tasting and become prey to wire worms and other underground pests. But summer planted turnips nearly always thrive and go on to produce nice, sweet, juicy turnips which store nicely in a cool cellar nearly all winter.

We love to eat turnips peeled and raw, sliced in vinegar and sugar as a side salad of sorts, as well as boiled, roasted, mashed, and fried. There's a good reason turnips were always popular with early-day homesteaders.

So, come fall, our cool basement pantry bins are stuffed with potatoes, carrots, and plenty of turnips. And, remember, both carrots and turnips



Rutabagas and turnips can be planted as late as July for a fall harvest.

will take some frost and even freezing in the ground. It only improves their flavor and sweetens them naturally.

Use a hoop house to extend your fall growing season

We've found by using a simple, home-made hoop house, we can greatly extend our fall growing season. We usually get a killing frost in the middle of September, then get about three weeks of Indian summer. So the crops we want to last longer go in the hoop houses where not only the plastic covering holds in the sun's heat to help late crops thrive despite the cooler outside temperatures, but when there's a frost warning, we can quickly shut the end doors and light a propane heater. When it drops to the 20s outside, it remains a balmy 60 degrees inside!

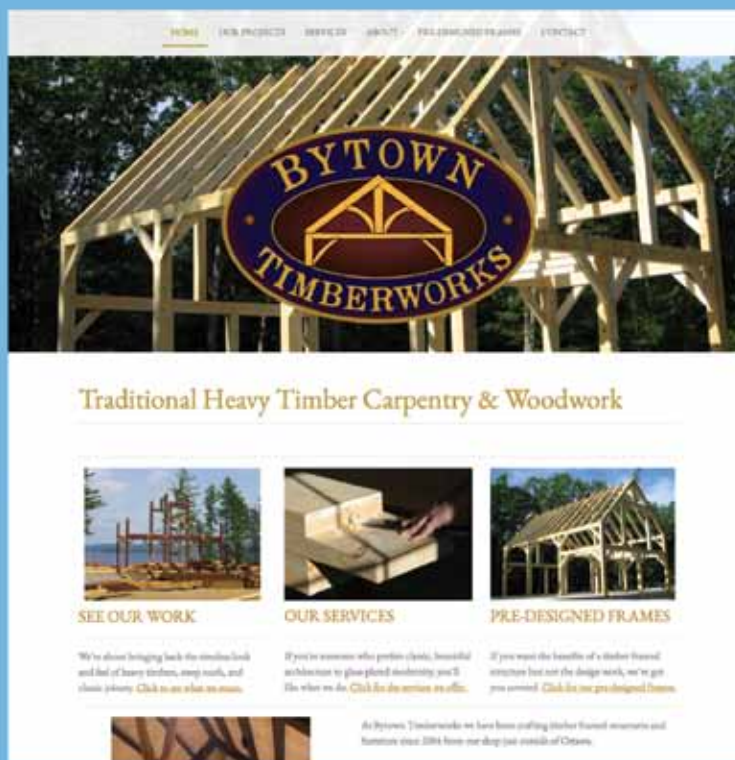
Our hoop houses are inexpensive-ly made, using treated 2x6 lumber for the base, EMT conduit for the hoops and greenhouse covering that we buy at Growers Supply (www.growersupply.com). We used to buy regular plastic 6 mil sheeting at the local farm store but soon found it ripped apart during a single summer. Our greenhouse fabric has been on year-around for five years now and the only rips are from where a deer ran into the side and stuck his head through. We taped that hole and it's fine. The cost of one house is less than \$100 and we feel it is well worth the price, considering how much more food we can grow in it.

We've grown everything from peppers to pole beans in our hoop houses with great success.



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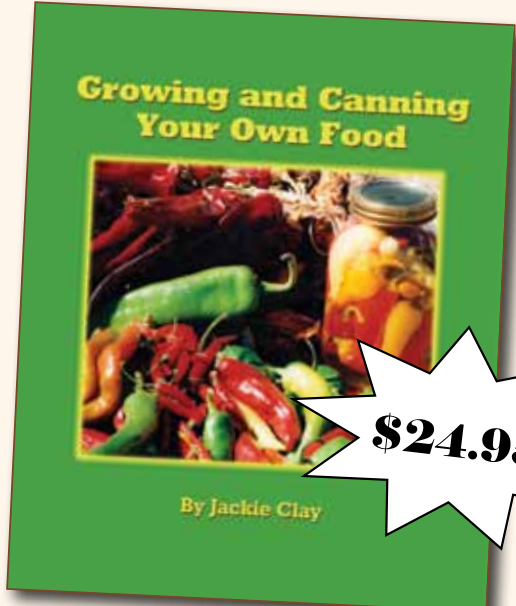
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Welcome to Gail's Garden:

Starting your own home-based cottage industry

By Gail Butler

It's satisfying to earn money by doing what you enjoy, especially if you can do it at home. There is no overhead for renting a business space and no commute. By

working from home you'll be adding another level of self-sufficiency that doesn't depend on anyone but yourself. Having internet service isn't essential, but is an advantage if you plan to sell online.

The big questions to consider when starting a cottage industry are:

What will I sell?

How do I begin?

Are there any legal requirements?

Taking stock

Begin by taking stock of what you already have to offer, what you like to do, and your skills. Chances are you're already doing or producing something that is marketable. You may just need to do a little more of it so you'll have some extra to sell. Here are a few questions to get you thinking.

Do you grow anything?

Do you raise animals?

Do you have productive hobbies?

Do you have an in-demand skill?

I'll share the method I used to launch my own cottage industry operated from my farmhouse and property in rural Utah.

I grew almost everything I ate as part of my self-sufficiency strategy. There was an orchard, berry patches, herb and flower gardens, numerous raised beds for growing vegetables, and a large patch for corn. I also raised chickens for eggs.

The flower beds surrounding the house were sown with a wide variety of old-fashioned cottage garden flowers. All of these were prolific self-seeders. Likewise, all the heirloom vegetables I planted each year were grown from my saved seeds.

One day it occurred to me that instead of simply saving only enough veggie seed for the next growing season, I could save more seeds and sell them. As to the flowers, instead of letting all their seeds fall to the ground, some could be collected and sold.



Welcome to Gail's Garden



Unique and fragrant potpourri mixes can be made from a variety of plants that you may already be growing.

Using my computer, I designed labels and glued them to “coin” envelopes (available at stationery stores) creating simple, appealing, and inexpensive packaging for my seeds that I sold on Etsy, eBay, at local shops and feed stores, and the town’s seasonal farmer’s market. Growing additional produce enabled me to maximize my profits at the farmer’s market by selling the seeds right alongside their garden-fresh counterparts.

Before long, I added other products to my seeds line. I grew and dried herbs and hops to sell in bulk. Flower petals, berries, leaves, buds, and orris iris root were dried and mixed with essential oils to create my own unique and fragrant brand of seasonal potpourris.

Planting and drying birdhouse gourds — each drilled with a bird-size hole, then another small enough to fashion a wire hanger — added another product to my growing business. The gourds were sold “artist ready,” to be painted-to-suit by the buyer.

Spare eggs from my chicken girls were marketed locally as “free-range” because my chickens were happily ranging free over much of my property during the day. When I switched



Choose a simple, easy to remember business name. Here, dried hops are for sale.

the girls to organic feed I was able to charge higher prices for my eggs.

One of my best sellers turned out to be an heirloom sourdough starter that had traveled West with pioneers. After developing a method for growing and drying it so it could be shipped, it

was market ready. A recipe pamphlet detailing how to feed and care for it helped the customer re-activate the starter and begin baking with it.

A sewing hobby further expanded my product line when I began making



Orris iris is not only beautiful, but marketable for its harvested and dried root.



If your hens are free range and fed an organic or GMO-free feed, you can command a higher price for your eggs.

knitting stitch markers and Mason jar pincushion/sewing kits.

Eventually, as my business grew, I expanded by selling my products internationally.

By taking stock of what you grow, raise, make, and create, you'll have the basis for building your own home-based operation. Part of self-sufficiency is being able to make and save some money for those times when it's needed.

Build your brand

Give your business a name that's simple and easy for folks to remember. My business name was "Gail's Garden." Nearly everything I marketed came out of my garden with only a few exceptions.

The use of "alliteration" or even "rhyme" within your business name helps prospective customers remember it ... think something like ... "Elsie's Eggs," "Hank's Happy Hens," "Mary's Berries" can be memorable, as well as part of your marketing strategy.

Does your homestead, farm, ranch, or home have a name or title? You

may wish to incorporate it as part of your business's name.

Perhaps you want to specialize by selling yogurt, cheese, and body-care products from the milk of the animals you raise? Or, you might plan to hand-dye and sell wool from your angora rabbits, sheep, or alpacas? By researching natural dyes, you may

find you're already growing some of the ingredients!

Your business name can be both a brand and a description of your products. If you decide to apply for a business license you'll need a name to identify your business.

Once you've defined your brand and product, you'll want to target your potential market. Will your products be aimed at men, women, or both?

Perhaps, your market will be children's goods, clothes, or toys. Maybe your customers will be city dwellers looking to add a little "country" to their lives through your homemade, handmade, one-of-a-kind country-themed items.

Set "tone" and "theme"

Part of creating a successful home business — in addition to having a great product — is to evoke a feeling in your customers. People are more likely to patronize your business if it creates sense of affinity, nostalgia, or a pleasant association. Eventually, you'll forge a relationship with your repeat customers based on satisfaction and trust.

As an example of setting "tone and theme" I used my farmhouse as part



These knitting stitch markers were a natural addition to my offerings, since things like knitting and sewing are a complementary homestead skill.



To sell food out of your home you may need a certified kitchen and food handlers license. Check local regulations carefully before selling prepared food products.

of my brand. My home happened to be a charming Folk Victorian that I used on some of my product labels and brochures as part of my brand's theme.

Pictures of your garden, your home, your barn, livestock at pasture, or your workshop — in addition to your products — can be used to create that iconic feeling that makes your products even more desirable and unique.

Words may be used similarly. In addition to pictures, my advertising tone and theme included the words “charming,” “country cottage,” “organic,” “heirloom,” “homemade,” and “hand-crafted.” Additionally, my seller's biography included “heart and home” and “farm and family values.” All of these words create an emotion, a feeling, invoke a memory, or

resonate with an ideal, contributing to a subtle sense of well-being. Your customers will not only want to buy your product, but support your brand with their purchasing power.

Will your business primarily consist of on-line selling? If so, you can create nearly any tone and theme you want as long as it's honest to your product.

If customers will be coming to your homestead, you'll want it to be part of your tone and theme. Tidy up yards and outbuildings. Messiness and disrepair can deter customers. Garbage, old tires, rusting engine blocks can be a turnoff, while a few colorful pots of flowers or window boxes add a welcoming atmosphere customers will appreciate.

However, a certain rusticity can complement your theme. The unpainted barn, the rusted tractor in the field, the chickens pecking in the yard, can evoke a yearning for a simpler life, or simply to own a bit of yours by buying something.

A baker's dozen: Provide something extra

I discovered that sending a small complimentary envelope of flower or vegetable seeds and a printed “thank you for your order” card with each product sold resulted in repeat orders. Giving a little gift or a “thank you” to your customers lets them know that they're appreciated.

My seed packets always included more seeds than those sold from nurseries, and usually at lower prices because they were so easy to gather and package. I was able to pass the savings on to my customers, which they valued.

You may be able to compete with big businesses by offering some of your products at a reduced price because you'll have so little overhead. People are always looking for a deal and many would rather buy from a cottage industry than a big box seller.

However, don't sell yourself short! Some items will command higher prices because of the time and labor going into handmade, homemade items, as opposed to what's mass-produced. “Heirloom,” “hand-crafted,” “organic,” “pastured,” or “free range” will command higher prices, and people will pay them.

Truth in advertising

In creating your business's brand, tone and theme, be as honest and truthful as you can. Your products should always live up their advertising. If something breaks, fails to germinate, etc., offer “money back” or “exchange options.” Few people request their money back, but if they do, then a refund is warranted.



Herbs, harvested and dried, can be an excellent product to offer.



If customers will be coming to your homestead you will want to make sure it is neat and tidy.

Indicating that you have a “money back” policy allays any hesitancy first-time buyers may have in ordering from you. It suggests that you have faith in your own product. You want buying from you to be an easy and dependable process.

Another tactic is to offer “free shipping” on domestic orders. I wasn’t able to do this for international orders due to the high cost of other-country mailing fees. However, international customers are very willing to pay their country’s high shipping costs. Etsy, Amazon, and eBay offer international selling options that make it easy to do, and both international and US postage amounts are easy to check online at the Post Office website, www.usps.com.

Legalities of home-based selling

Many states allow you to sell home-cooked/processed food items if the home kitchen passes inspection. Check with your local health department for home kitchen requirements before you begin building.

It’s likely you’ll need a “food handlers” license and a “home based business certificate” from your county if you plan on selling home baked or home-canned goods. You’ll need to check with your local health department for further information. Legal requirements for home businesses vary from place to place, so research online or call your city hall before diving in.

It’s likely that you’ll need to add a “Schedule C” business form to your income taxes if you’re making a profit from your business. However, you’ll also be able to deduct the costs of materials, feed, postage, shipping, and travel, if any.

Having your own home-grown business is satisfying and can be very profitable. Remember, if you grow it, raise it, make it, or in some manner create it, you can have your own home based business and ... sell it! Δ

10 tips for selling your homemade product

By Lisa Nourse

My husband and I purchased our current property when we were young and poor — very poor.

Shortly after purchasing the property we got our first property tax statement. It was just under \$600. Back then that was a lot of money, especially for us. I decided right then that the property would have to produce something that at least paid the taxes on it.

The property tax statement came in late October — almost time for people to start thinking about Christmas. We had a lot of evergreen trees and other plants along with a red flame grape vine that grew wild. I'm fairly crafty and creative so I decided to try making Christmas wreaths and selling them to pay the taxes.

Tip #1: Determine what you want to sell. For me, the wreaths made sense since I could use what I had on hand, purchase other items needed for very little money, or find the remainder for free. Other factors may determine what you decide to sell or what service you choose to provide.

I gathered the materials, made the wreaths, and rented a space at a local Christmas Bazaar. I quickly sold out and started taking orders for more. The following week I made the ordered wreaths and delivered them.

I made enough money to pay the taxes and decided that since it worked out so well I would make wreaths every year.



Selling wreaths made from natural products was an easy decision.

As it turned out, I did not even have to rent a space at the bazaar the following year. People that purchased my wreaths previously contacted me and pre-ordered a wreath. Some of them also ordered wreaths as gifts for their family or friends.

Tip #2: Provide an excellent product or service for your customers. This keeps them coming back and they will tell their friends and family about you.

Tip #3: Make it easy for your customers to contact you by giving them a card or attaching one to the product. With each wreath I sold, I included a card attached to the back with my phone number and email address.

Tip #4: Let people know you have a product for sale. Each year a few weeks before I started making wreaths I hung flyers on all of the local bulletin boards in town. The flyers included photos of wreaths I had



To accommodate some customers, I branched out and made products they requested like this mantel garland.

made along with my contact information.

It's not enough to rent a booth at a farmer's market and just sit there hoping the people will come. You will undoubtedly get some customers, but if people know you will be there, you will likely increase your sales.

If you only offer sales at certain times of the year, advertise in your local paper, on social media, and hang flyers letting people know where and when you will be selling your product.

I do not have experience selling online, but it makes sense that you will want to be able to get in touch with your customers to let them know about your products, any specials or promotions that you are running, or if you will be at a certain event. This can be through Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, other social media, or through an email-subscriber list. There are companies available that will help you create and maintain an email list such as Mailchimp or Constant Contact.

There are lots of online sales platforms to choose from: Etsy, ArtFire, and Storenvy are a few. Even Amazon has a "handmade" platform now.

Tip #5: Tell people about your product.

Along with the contact information on the card I attached to the wreaths, I also wrote a short paragraph about the materials being sourced from my own property and harvested in a sustainable manner so people would know I wasn't out stripping the forest to make the wreaths.

It's not hard to print some informational cards and attach them to whatever you're selling. If you are selling produce at a farmers' market, make a sign that lets your customers know about your growing methods and a little bit about your homestead. You can also create tri-fold flyers to hand out with each sale.

If you are selling prepared food products, be sure to let people know you have a certified kitchen and a food handlers license. This assures them that the food they are purchasing was created in a clean and proper environment with the expertise needed to produce a quality product.

Tip #6: Go the extra mile for customers. I had several older ladies that called me wanting a wreath, but no longer could drive or had other reasons they couldn't get out. I was happy to deliver the wreaths to them. It was not much trouble for me to set up one or two days for deliveries and it made all the difference in the world to those that needed this extra service. Many of them were so grateful that they wanted to give me money for fuel.

Tip #7: If at all possible accommodate your customers wishes. There were a few people who contacted me and loved the wreaths, but preferred something they could hang along



Because most of the materials grow wild on my property, both the labor and cost of producing wreaths is fairly low for me.

their mantle or stair rail, and a few who wanted a centerpiece for their table. So I branched out into making garlands and centerpieces as well as wreaths. There were even a few people who only wanted cedar boughs and other greenery to be able to make their own decorations. Branching out into other products was fun for me and I made sales I might not have made otherwise.

Tip #8: Know your target market and try to make your products affordable for the people that want to purchase them. Other than the cost of wire, ribbon, and a little bit of printing, most of the material used in making the wreaths was free to me. Because of this I was able to price my wreaths a little lower and beat out the competition.

There are a lot of older folks living on nothing but Social Security and

these people often have to make a decision to forgo a food item if they want to purchase something extra. A lot of my customers were older ladies who wanted something Christmassy in their home, but were no longer interested or able to put up a tree with all the trimmings.

Tip #9: If you're selling your items at a bazaar or farmer's market, always have bags available. If a customer already has a couple of items in their hands, they may pass up a product if they have to juggle the rest of the way through the market and out to their car. I didn't have to worry about packaging, but that is something that is important when considering what you will be selling, especially if you are selling products online and have to ship them. There are companies out there such as ULine that sell all kinds of boxes, packaging, and bags.

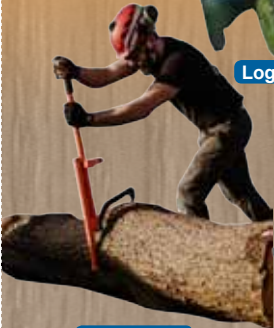
Tip #10: Create a display that is pleasing to look at and showcases your product at its best. (This includes good photos if you are selling online.) Your display should vary for different shows or events. For instance you may use baskets and crates to display your product at a farmers' market and use something a little more refined for an arts and crafts show.

The year that I sold wreaths at the Christmas Bazaar I spent a lot of time designing and building my display to make it appealing to customers. After that first year, I was grateful I didn't have to go that route anymore because it really was a lot of work.

The most important tip: Say thank you! Showing gratitude to your customers for helping you to provide for your family is an essential part of a good sale. Δ

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