Hello Urbanites,

With another year sealed in history and a new year upon us, January is always a unique time for reflection on the seasons past and preparation for the seasons to come. Some of us do so with open arms, some with hope for change, and some with uncertainty of the path ahead. Recent political shifts may lift our spirits while escalating geo-political conflicts may deflate them, one thing remains constant – change that is real, that you can see, feel, and breath, starts at home, and generally comes from within. The word ecology, coined by German zoologist Ernst Haeckel in 1873 as 'okologie', comes from the Greek word 'oikos' which translates to mean "house, dwelling place, habitation". Economics, likewise is derived from oikos and while it has come to be defined by Webster's as 'a social science concerned chiefly with description and analysis of the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services', perhaps it is better understood and acted upon as it was defined in c. 1530 as 'household management'.

Household management may be considered by some the organization and execution of chores, household inventory, family activities and the like, traditionally relegated to the domain of the 'homemaker' but another perspective might be to consider economics, or household management, to mean the 'managing' of ideas and actions that create a stable, nurturing, and sustainable household. If we widen our perspective to consider our community, and our goal is to have a sustainable community then it would have to be made up of sustainable households. Further widening our perspective, if we wanted to have a sustainable global community, it would have to be made up of sustainable communities. Which eventually brings us back home. How can we create a sustainable household?

While there are countless cultural paths and perspectives to consider, the American roots of a sustainable household are most epitomized and perhaps easily lifted from that of the 'homesteader'. Who or what is a homesteader you may ask? Well, by Webster's definition, a homesteader is someone who acquires a tract of land from the United States by filing a record and living on and cultivating that tract. Unfortunately that option is not in the cards for most of us, but that doesn't mean you can't be a 'citysteader', a term we heard from our friends Sorrel and Yeast, creators of Source – a quarterly zine for the Bay Area – and the subject of their 3rd issue. That issue is filled with details on how city dwellers like ourselves can save money, reduce waste, and reclaim beautiful, gratifying skills by making their own yogurt, butter, cheese, bread, sauerkraut, kombucha, mead, jams and by raising chickens, ducks, and bees. For more information check out their website bayareasource.googlepages.com. Certainly 'citysteading' goes beyond food and their 4th issue will be addressing greywater reuse, rainwater harvesting, solar ovens, and bike powered machines – all components of a sustainable household.

So what changes are we looking for in this new year? What changes and sacrifices are we willing to make for that to happen? Maybe some of us will pack up and run to the country because we're convinced the city can't be sustainable, while others will dig their heels in and explore every facet of making their existence in an urban center as

sustainable as possible. Maybe some of us think sustainable is not enough and that we need a culture change that will bring us to a new level of thinking about our place in the ecosystem we rely on for our needs now and in the future. Whichever river you follow, it will lead to a sea of opportunities. You may consider raising your own chickens because of the healthier eggs, incredible fertilizer, pest control, and deeper connection to nature, but if that's too much right now, perhaps you can make a commitment simply to not buy eggs from places that cage hens, cut off their beaks, and don't leave them any room or place to enjoy a natural life. We recently added to our pair of ducks, Emma and Mr. Dottie, three chickens, Frida, Nina, and Joni, because we wanted to experience what it was like to raise chickens in the city, so that we could more accurately advocate for others to do the same. After watching them act out their natural behaviors and desires like hoping and flying around, scratching, and most incredibly – taking a dust bath (which entails lying on their side, stretching their legs out, and throwing soil all over themselves), we feel like we can't eat eggs from any store (or diner for that matter) that doesn't offer the hens a natural, peaceful existence.

When you consider that most places we shop for eggs: Safeway, Trader Joe's, Costco, convenience stores, even Whole Foods, only offer eggs from hens that have their beaks clipped to prevent cannibalism (a hen phenomena found only in confined chicken raising), it becomes clear that while businesses can package their products with words like "organic, free range, cage free," and the like, you ultimately decide whether that is good enough for you to purchase their product, or boycott their practices. For more information on local eggs, click here. We hope this doesn't come across as a rant against the evils of our corpratocracy, but rather an example of the necessity for each of us to consider what harm, if any, we are willing to do to our earth's cultures and creatures, and what steps we will take in our own lives and to encourage those around us to take towards a more livable future. While many of us are taking steps by making 'New Years Resolutions', here are some to consider:

1. Go Local! Buy only food grown and raised in an ecological manner within 150 miles from your mouth. If that is a bit daunting, try it for just a week, then a month, then a year. If that is too challenging, try foods from just California, or at least no produce from outside the country. Email us for suggestions!
2. Go vegetarian, or vegan, and if not, eat much less meat and fish – here's why.
3. Send nothing to the landfill – reduce, reuse, recycle, and REFUSE anything that comes in a package that can't be recycled or composted, and if you're already there, only acquire things that can be reused or composted as recycling is still energy intensive and serves mainly to create new products to consume. Buy in bulk, or from the farmer's market, and if you must buy something wrapped in landfill waste, at least buy it from a local producer or from a mom and pop shop when possible.
4. Grow yer own! Ramp up your household and community garden food production. If you're a novice, maybe you want to collectively cultivate a patch of lettuce or kale with a friend who's learning as well. If you're an accomplished urban gardener, go out and teach others, share your skills, your seeds, and the fruits of your labor so that others may see the benefits.

5. Start a 'citysteading' activity and keep it up throughout the year. Making your own yogurt is as simple as mixing milk heated to 90-100 degrees Fahrenheit with a little existing yogurt and keeping it at that temperature for at least 8 hours. There are many creative ways of doing so and you're just a step away from making cheese. In that way, you can reuse glass jars, and provide yourself or your family with healthy, fresh, and active probiotics.

You may not see the world change as quickly as you would like, but taking some of these steps and making ethical convictions of your, own not only brings about the obvious health, nutritional, ecological, and economical benefits but also manifests the intentions of cooperative living in a Western cultural worldview that looks at life and nature as resources to be produced, logged, extracted, manipulated, dammed, bottled, synthesized, genetically altered, confined, slaughtered, packaged, shipped, marketed, sold, and eventually dumped. The moral decisions you make and the actions you take towards a more green, organic, sustainable, ecological, or whatever you want to call it, way of life are not going to come from mass media, politicians, or influential speakers. They are going to come from the same place humans have learned to live sustainably on this planet for the last 200,000 years – enthusiastic and practical observation of nature. Nearly every culture or society that continues to exist today without a dominator paradigm does so without destroying the ecosystem that supports it. They have been able to do so by observing their place as a facilitator and conditional element of their ecosystem, not as a manager or separate entity. There is abundance available to those who seek it. Tom Brown Jr., the naturalist, tracker, and survivalist, says a world beyond your imagination can be viewed in the cracks in the sidewalk; all you have to do is look. Another great reference for 'citysteading' is the book The Urban Homestead: Your Guide to Self-Sufficient Living in the Heart of the City by Kelly Coyne and Erik Knutzen.

WHATS NEW WITH ECOSF

As you may have concluded, we have been exploring the many virtues and lessons learned from urban homesteading over the last several months. Our three chickens, Frida (Kahlo) a Plymouth Barred Rock, Nina (Simone) a Silver-Laced Wyandotte, and Joni (Mitchell) an Ameraucana, are housed in a mostly slip-straw chicken coop made almost entirely with reused materials costing less than $100 to build. Like ducks, chickens provide so many benefits and very few drawbacks as well as life long lessons for children and adults alike to be around wild nature, domesticated as they are. In San Francisco, you are allowed to keep up to 4 birds, provided you follow these rules.
If you would like to learn more about raising ducks or hens in the city, and schedule a visit to check out our urban flock, please email or call us.

In keeping with our mission to empower citizens to create cooperative communities, one of our latest projects, Baker's Alley, seeks to do just that. With the help of the community, we built an earth oven of clay, sand, straw, with an urbanite (sidewalk concrete) base to fire up once a month as a community oven to bring people together for workshops, gatherings, skill sharing, and potluck. This will be a place for us to outreach

to the community, open our lending library to the public, and offer our seedlings and other homemade goods and crafts. The first event was to build the oven, the second was a workshop taught by professional baker Tracy Wolfe, and our upcoming event on January 17th, will be a workshop on handmade pottery made with local clay and fired in a sawdust kiln with professional potter and teacher, Bea Bloom. As always, the oven will be filled with breads, cookies, muffins, scones, and more made by the community for the community. We hope to see you there! Check out this article about Baker's Alley. If you have any ideas for events at Baker's Alley or have any comments or feedback, please let us know.

A recent workshop on food preservation taught by Davin and Tori at Other Avenues sent participants home with kimchi, strawberry jam, and a kombucha mother. We want to share these skills in hopes of demystifying them and spreading a culture of culturing for the nutritional and health benefits, to preserve and prolong your harvest, and to provide an outlet for expression of local flavors made with local yeasts and local people. Did you know there is a species of lactic acid, the power behind sourdough bread, scientifically known as *Lactobacillus sanfranciscensis*? If you would like to learn more about fermentation or would like to host a workshop on fermented and cultured foods, please let us know.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Jan. 10th - Saturday - 11am-4pm : **Monroe Elementary School Garden Work Day** -
- Cob Bench building : You should see it now! Cob building in inclement weather is a blast and all the better with friends and family and the goal of completing the student's outdoor classroom. If you haven't made it out to a cob event, perhaps this one is the one!
- Enjoy a potluck of local, homegrown, and homemade foods, including solar oven baking if the sun is out! Bring something to share!
- Salad bar gardening : We'll be adding to our salad bar bed we have been planting over t he last several months. Learn about crop rotation, succession, and fertilizing for maximum yields and quality.
- Location : 260 Madrid St between Excelsior and Avalon in the Excelsior district.

Jan. 17th - Saturday - 10am-4pm : **Baker's Alley Handmade Pottery Workshop** -
- Hand made pottery : With guest potter and teacher Bea Bloom, learn how to make simple, practical, and beautiful pottery from local clays.
- Saw dust kiln firing : Once you have bisque ware you're ready for firing and if you don't have money for a big expensive kiln, a simple sawdust kiln for one time, or multiple firings can do the trick for low fired pottery.
- Community baking : As always, the oven is fired and available for all your baking needs. Bring something to bake and share, or just a potluck dish and a smile.
- Location : 1390 31st Ave between Judah and Irving in the Sunset district.

Other notable events this month:

Jan. 7th – Wednesday – 6:30pm-10pm : **SF Permaculture Guild Meeting**

- The Guild - Bringing together professionals, educators, designers, consultants, and activists around the common thread of Permaculture for a village renaissance in the urban pulse of the city of San Francisco
- The Meeting Place - Gazebo at the California Pacific Medical Center's (CPMC) Davies campus. The driveway entrance is in the middle of Castro Street between 14th and Duboce Streets.
- For more information, click here.

Jan. 17th – Saturday – 12pm-3pm : **CRFG Golden Gate Chapter Scion Exchange**
- California Rare Fruit Growers (CRFG) 2009 Scion Exchange
- The event includes grafting wood and cuttings for rooting, a grafting demonstration at 1 pm, and low-cost pamphlets about growing uncommon fruits and vegetables. $3 donation requested to help defray costs; most plant materials are free.
- For directions and more information, click here.

Jan. 21st-24th – Multiple Days and Hours : **29th Annual Eco-Farm Conference**
- Put on by the Ecological Farming Association, an organization dedicated to the development of ecological farming practices domestically and around the world.
- This event brings together some of the best minds and practices to bring about a food system we can all sink our teeth into.
- For more information, click here.

SPECIES OF THE MONTH:

Winter Fruit: Queens of the Forest

In many places winter is a time for rest and rumination; the myriad living things of the world hibernate and gather energy for the upcoming rebirth in spring. Although this cycle of change is indeed unfolding in our own environment there is also an unmistakable bursting of life brought on by the saturation of winter rains that pour down upon our hillsides this time of year. The sprouting grasses blanket those precious few unpaved surfaces and in the urban forests, along the coast and in the parks, there are beautiful fruits emerging and ripening like peaches in the middle of July. Fruits, in January?

These magnificent and mysterious winter fruits we speak of are… mushrooms of course! What we call mushrooms are really the fruiting bodies of Fungi that can come in many diverse forms such as Gilled Mushrooms (our familiar friends), Boletes, Puffballs, Earth Stars, Stinkhorns, Bird's Nest Fungi, Jelly Fungi, Bracket or Shelf Fungi, Rusts and Smuts. Each of these groups of Fungi have bizarre and beautiful growth forms to match their interesting names. The mushrooms we know and love are mostly the Gilled Mushrooms and Boletes and while there are only 14 species cultivated for food, and just 6 varieties of mushrooms cultivated on an industrial scale (Enoki, Shitake, Padi Straw, Oyster, and two types of our little tasteless favorites, the standard "Button"), there are many varieties of wild mushrooms that are considered culinary delicacies worldwide, and some of them are springing up right here under our noses.

One of the highly treasured local culinary caps is ***Boletus edulis***, commonly referred to as the King Bolete or Queen Bolete, *Cepes* in French and *Porcini* (meaning piglet) in Italian. All Boletes are easily distinguished from Gilled Mushrooms (whose spores are arranged along the gills) due to the presence of vertically arranged tubes that house the spores underneath the cap. The ability to remove the entire layer of tubes from the soft, quickly decaying, putrescent fruiting body is also a way to distinguish the Boletes from the Polypore (Shelf Fungi), which also have vertical tube structures using spores. Our local *B. edulis* varieties are usually white with the cap browning, or reddening, with age but Boletes can range from black to brown to red, yellow, and white. Most species of Bolete are edible but there are some poisonous varieties, so careful and complete identification is always necessary when foraging for wild mushrooms (a wise Fungi philosopher once said, "All mushrooms are edible at least once"). Some key features for I.D. are body color, spore color, arrangement of pores, cap surface features, and color when bruised; remember, a good field guide for wild mushrooms is essential.

Picture this. A heavy rainstorm cruised through last week and the sun has been shining a little bit and you find yourself hanging out with nothing in particular to do. You remember the fine fruits of winter that are poking up all around the city and you get geared up, grab a basket and a field guide and off you go to say… Lands End. But where do you start looking for the queens of the forest floor?

If you're up on your ecological relationships you know that most of the Boletes, and definitely *Porcinis,* are ectomycorrhizal (EM), which means they form a type of mutualistic relationship with trees and plants. There are over 2000 EM species in North America and nearly **all** agricultural, horticultural, and ornamental plants are associated with endomycorrhizal mycelium (also called VAM). The difference between the two types (EM and VAM) is basically that EM mycelium form a mat around the root tip and grow in the intercellular spaces between the root cells and VAM mycelium do not form an outer mat but instead make vesicular arbuscular nodules (get it, VAM), penetrate the root tips and actually grow inside the root cells. In both mycorrhizal associations the fungus uses its vast network of mycelium to absorb, and share, water and nutrients like nitrogen, potassium and phosphorous with the plant. In return the plant gives the fungus carbohydrates, amino acids and vitamins created during photosynthesis. Some studies have even shown one fungus connected to several trees and through careful experimentation photosynthates from one tree were shown to have been shared with the other tree via the mycelium. These complex ecological connections between fungi and plants, which have recently been illuminated, are creating a whole new paradigm of ecosystem relationships that places fungi in a foundational role as the vital network of water, nutrient, and mineral distribution that supports an entire forest.

Now back to our story. You're out in the field, on a foray as they say in the trade, and you know the lovely little piglets are associated with certain plants, specifically Pines, Oaks, Beech, Aspen and Firs. That narrows it down a little since out of those few trees there are only Monterey Pines (*Pinus radiata*) at Lands End, and now you can really get down and dirty. You may only see a little lump pushing up the pine duff or you may

find a twenty pound porker, and they may not be right under a tree since the mycelial networks can stretch great distances underground, but if you go with an open mind and open eyeballs you have a decent chance of finding the makings of a gourmet meal right on the trail. Even if you don't find *Boletus edulis* your first time out you're guaranteed to find a whole new world of fungus amongus and that can be just as good. If you do find a Bolete check out this website on how to prepare it at home.

There's tons of information out there about Boletes, mushrooms and fungus in general and here in the Bay Area we are lucky to have a very active mycological community facilitated by the Mycological Society of San Francisco. The Society leads regular forays with local mushroom experts and puts on many other great community events all about fungus. A respected field guide on the Boletes is *California Mushrooms: a Field Guide to the Boletes* written by Harry D. Thiers who taught Mycology at San Francisco State for many years, and for whom the herbarium at the university is named. To study the standard university text with a complete treatment of all the fungi from Cellular Slime Molds to Yeasts to Gilled Mushrooms check out *Introductory Mycology* 4th edition by Alexopoulos et al. Finally, for the serious mushroom maniac a must read is Paul Stamets' *Mycelium Running: How Mushrooms Can Save The world,* which covers the historic and spiritual importance of fungi, ecological roles of fungi, myco-forestry, myco-remediation, myco-restoration, mushroom cultivation and lots of other fascinating info. Another useful reference *Mushrooms of San Francisco: A Walk on Land's End* was written by Roger Bland with illustrations by Sally Bland; members of ECOSF and their hard to find but fascinating and very informative book is available in our lending library. As always, the best way to learn is to get out there and connect with the natural world. See ya on the trail!

ECO MEDIA

If you think biodiversity die-off is a problem only affecting plants and animals, consider that we're animals too, and indigenous cultural survival is just as important. Hundreds of cultural traditions disappear each year because they don't fit the role the regional governments that occupy their lands want them to be and with them the sacred, profound, and sustainable practices of their people. Wade Davis, an anthropologist, ethnobotanist, and explorer-in-residence with the National Geographic has been one of the strongest advocates for indigenous cultural awareness and survival for several decades. Click here to watch or listen to a talk he gave at the recent TED conference.

Still unclear about the debate over a carbon tax vs. cap and trade, or the pros and cons of a nuclear energy future? Earthbeat Radio, a syndicated Pacifica Network program that features leading environmental activists and thinkers – the politics and people behind the efforts to defend the planet, offers answers to these questions and more in their past two shows which you can download from their website here.

BOOK OF THE MONTH

Wild Fermentation, by Sandor Ellix Katz and published by Chelsea Green Publishing has been a real inspiration for us in so many ways. It's a cookbook for probiotics and nutrition, a history of fermentation culture and tradition from around the world, and a call to action for all of us to stop accepting mass produced and mass marketed foods that represent a global cultural homogenization wiping out languages, oral traditions, beliefs, and practices associated with local fermented foods, and replacing them with uniformity the likes of Kraft, Coca-Cola, and McDonalds around the world. Katz brings together a decade of experience, study, and teaching the art, science, and magic of fermenting foods at home ranging from Japanese Nuka Bran Pickles (one of our favorites), Tempeh, Lebanese Kishk, Tibetan Tara-Buckwheat Pancakes (also known as Drawoe Kura), Sourdough bread, Ethiopian Injera, Cherokee Sour Corn Gv-No-He-Nv, as well as your more familiar yogurts, cheeses, and honey wines. I short read packed with big ideas and lots of encouragement. It's easy! Here is an excerpt on Vegetable Ferments:

KIMCHI

Kimchi is a spicy Korean pickle, made in an impressive variety of styles. It is prepared by fermenting Chinese cabbage, radishes or turnips, scallions, other vegetables, and often seafood, with ginger, hot red chili pepper, garlic, and often fish sauce.

Kimchi is a national passion in South and North Korea. The Korean Food Research Institute estimates that the average adult Korean consumes more than a quarter pound (125 grams) of kimchi every day. Day after day, that adds up to a lot of kimchi. Though factory-manufactured kimchi is gaining in popularity and making it at home is on the decline, according to the same source, three-quarters of all kimchi consumed in South Korea is still made in the home. It is customary practice for employers to give their employers an annual "kimchi bonus" in the autumn so they can purchase the ingredients to make their annual supply.

I recently served kimchi to my friend MaxZine's father, Leon Weinstein. Leon served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. The smell of the kimchi reminded him of that time. Smells are powerfully evocative, and the kimchi's assertive essence brought him right back to the front lines fifty years ago.

A recent international trade dispute between Korea and Japan focused on kimchi authenticity. It seems that many people in Japan have developed a taste for the Korean-style pickle. Japan has become Korea's biggest export market for kimchi. But Japanese manufacturers developed a kimchi-like product that replaces the fermentation process with flavor additives such as citric acid. The Japanese pseudo-kimchi is cheaper than kimchi, since the element of time is removed from manufacturing. It also appears to have somewhat broader appeal because of its less sharp flavor.

South Korea appealed to the Codex Alimentarius, an international food standards commission, to establish a definition of kimchi as a fermented food. "What the Japanese are selling is nothing more than cabbage sprinkled with seasonings and artificial flavorings," said Robert Kim, of Doosan Corporation, which operates the world's largest kimchi factory in Korea. Japan counters that its product is simply an innovate variation on traditional kimchi, arguing that Korea has no more of an exclusive claim to kimchi than India to curries or Mexico to tacos. After more than five years of deliberation and

diplomacy, the Codex process rendered a decision, established the fermented Korean version as the international standard for kimchi.

In certain respects, making kimchi is like making sauerkraut. One difference is that kimchi recipes generally call for soaking the cabbage and other vegetables in very salty brine for several hours to soften them quickly, then rinsing them and fermenting them with less salt. Kimchi is also distinguished by the generous use of ginger, garlic, scallions, and hot chili peppers. Kimchi generally ferments faster than sauerkraut. You can certainly make it in crock like sauerkraut but these recipes are for smaller quantities using quart size (liter) jars.

Baeuchu (Cabbage)
Kimchi

This is a basic kimchi.

TIMEFRAME: 1 week (or longer)

INGREDIENTS (for 1 quart/1 liter):
Sea salt
1 pound/500 grams Chinese cabbage (napa or bok choi)
1 daikon radish or a few red radishes
1 to 2 carrots
1 to 2 onions and/or leeks and/or a few scallions and/or shallots (or more!)
3 to 4 cloves of garlic (or more!)
3 to 4 hot red chilis (or more!), depending on how hot-peppery you like food, or any form of hot pepper, fresh, dried, or in a sauce (without chemical preservatives!)
3 tablespoons/45 milliliters (or more!) fresh grated gingerroot

PROCESS:

1. Mix a brine of about 4 cups (1 liter) or water and 4 tablespoons (60 milliliters) of salt. Stir well to thoroughly dissolve salt. The brine should taste good and salty.
2. Coarsely chop the cabbage, slice the radish and carrots, let the vegetables soak in the brine, covered by a plate or other weight to keep the vegetables submerged, until soft, a few hours, or overnight. Add other vegetables to the brine, snow peas, seaweeds, Jerusalem artichokes, anything you like.
3. Prepare spices: Grate the ginger; chop the garlic and onion; remove seeds from the chilies; and chop or crush, or throw them in whole. Kimchi can absorb a lot of spice. Experiment with quantities and don't worry too much about them. Mix spices into a paste. (If you wish, you can add fish sauce to the spice paste. Just check the label to be sure it has no chemical preservatives, which function to inhibit microorganisms.)
4. Drain brine off vegetables, reserving brine. Taste vegetables for saltiness. You want them to taste decidedly salty, but not unpleasantly so. If they are too salty, rinse them. If you cannon taste salt, sprinkle with a couple teaspoons (10 milliliters) salt, and mix.

5. Mix the vegetables with the ginger-chili-onion-garlic paste. Mix everything together thoroughly and stuff it into a clean quart-size (liter) jar. Pack it tightly into the jar, pressing down until the brine rises. If necessary, add a little of the reserved vegetable-soaking brine to the submerged vegetables. Weight the vegetables down with a smaller jar, or a zip-lock bag filled with brine. Or if you think you can remember to check the kimchi every day, you can just use your (clean!) fingers to push the vegetables back under the brine. I myself like the tactile involvement of this method, and I especially enjoy tasting the kimchi by licking my fingers after I do this. Either way, cover the jar to keep out dust and flies.
6. Ferment in your kitchen or other warm place. Taste the kimchi every day. After about a week of fermentation, when it tastes ripe, move it to the refrigerator. An alternative and more traditional method is to ferment kimchi more slowly and with more salt in a cool spot, such as a hole in the ground, or a cellar, or other cool place.

IN THE GARDEN THIS MONTH

This is the time of the year to finish up your planning for the coming seasons. Go over seed catalogs or meet with seasoned gardeners to find out which varieties do best for what you'd like to grow and your particular microclimate and situation. This is also the time of year to do your transplanting of bare root fruit trees and pruning and grafting. Be sure to check out the Scion Exchange going on here in San Francisco and other places around the Bay Area at the California Rare Fruit Growers website. It's also a good idea to load up on mulch or moisture holding material so a lot of nutrients remain in the soil as the rains wash through and organic matter can build up for spring planting.

With best intentions and action for the new year!

Davin, Sam, Tori