

Potatoes on Rooftops

Farming in the City

Hadley Dyer

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For Isabelle Lecroart
and Derek Huskins,
who grew our family
— Hadley Dyer

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Join the Good-Food Revolution

It goes without saying that a lot of people today, both young and old, are disconnected from food. Unsure of what's good to eat, where food comes from, or how it grows, we are all pretty confused—and hungry for food solutions. *How do I know this?* Because every day in FoodShare's Field to Table Schools team we meet students from junior kindergarten to twelfth grade who are looking for answers. Since 2006, over 10,000 students and 2,600 teachers, educators, and parents have participated in FoodShare's hands-on activities, whether it is in a workshop for 4-year-olds planting their very first seeds and learning that beans grow on a plant, or a Signature Salad workshop in which teens take



delicious pride in combining healthy, fresh ingredients in a unique way. Our participants not only learn new food skills, but also laugh and enjoy themselves. Food is fun!

There's a good-food revolution happening, and you should get involved if you want your food choices now and in the future to count toward a more fair food system. Reading books like this one will give you some great ideas on how to get started, but before you know it, you'll be looking for the next step: taking action.

The good-food revolution is happening in your kitchens, in your schoolyards, on your balconies, and in your communities, so it's the perfect time for you to start to understand good food—its origins, its producers, its journeys and its many exciting and delicious uses in the kitchen. In other words, become “food literate.”

There are so many wonderful choices to be made: what to eat, where to buy food, and what to grow this year. Join the good-food revolution by getting to know your local farmers, experiencing the joy of getting rich, dark soil stuck under your fingernails, and biting into the crispest, juiciest, most flavorful cucumber you've ever had (and grown). Growing your own food and cooking meals from scratch will be some of the most rewarding projects you'll ever do.

So, get excited, get involved, get your friends together, and get growing, cooking, and, of course, eating!

Brooke Ziebell
Field to Table Schools Coordinator
FoodShare Toronto
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We Must Act Now!

For thousands of years the focus every day for our ancestors was finding food just for that one day, but over time much has changed, and in the 1950s, the modern food system evolved quickly. Methods that had been effective at mobilizing war resources were adapted to food production. Tanks morphed into tractors, and chemical warfare turned into weed warfare. More food (in terms of quantity *and* diversity) became available and people assumed this would automatically improve health and feed the hungry. The highly mechanized, commercial food system that supplies our food has many successes to its credit. However, a great number of people around the world, even in wealthier countries, still go hungry.

Our focus on cheap, plentiful food hasn't ensured that everyone has enough good food to eat. In fact, how we grow, transport, process, consume, and dispose of our food is contributing to many serious issues. Alongside hunger, we also have rising numbers of people who are overweight or obese, which can lead to health problems. This is partly because unhealthy foods are often the most affordable and accessible, particularly in large urban areas. It's also partly because many people lack the ability to cook healthy meals, read food labels correctly, or know where their food comes from. And in terms of climate change, food systems are responsible for as much as a third of greenhouse gas emissions.

People increasingly understand that food is connected not only to health, but also to the environment, the economy, and the community. The key message of the urban farming movement and of this book is that our food systems must nourish all people, as well as the soil, air, and water around us. Our food system has to feed us now and for generations to come. The decisions we make today will affect the food system in the future and will have long-term consequences for humanity. We must act now!

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My City Garden

A gasp pierces the early-morning quiet.

The scene is stomach-churning.

Red and purple guts spilled onto a dusty deck floor.

A lovingly raised, perfectly perfect tomato, torn from its vine, chomped, and tossed aside.

By a squirrel.

If you've never tended a vegetable garden, this might seem a *tad* dramatic. But if you've ever picked a sun-warmed tomato that you grew yourself, washed it under a hose, and bit into it like an apple, you'll understand the need for a horror-movie sound track.

My house is about the size of a toadstool, but it has a large yard. After success growing vegetables in pots on my deck, I contacted a small business called Young Urban Farmers (YUF) to help me set up a proper garden. YUF is run by a group of entrepreneurs in their 20s who cleverly realized there was money to be made helping wannabe green thumbs like me. One of the owners, Chris Wong, came over to assess my growing spaces and answer questions.

I had a lot of them. Is my soil safe? (Yes.) Will my food be contaminated with pollution? (No.) Will my dog eat my crops or pee on them? (No, and yes.) Now I know I can plant just about anything in my city yard that you might plant in the countryside.



This is a book about growing food in cities, something hundreds of millions of people are doing around the world either because they want to or they have to. Many of these people are young. At first, it may not be obvious why kids and teens are growing potatoes on rooftops, peppers on balconies, and beans along concrete walls. Frankly, it wasn't always obvious to me why I bothered hauling soil and watering plants when I could have picked up dinner at the grocery store around the corner. But every day brings its own reason.

Because no workout feels as good as an afternoon in the garden.

Because the sight of a little green sprout nudging up from the earth makes me ridiculously proud.

Because scientific evidence suggests we're not *actually* going to live forever, but eating healthier, safer foods might prolong things a bit.

There are a whole bunch of other reasons, too, which you'll find in these pages, but the biggest one is this: because how we get our food matters. It has an impact on the environment, our communities, on our bodies and people in far-off corners of the planet.

And there's one more big reason: because nothing I've bought at the store has ever tasted as good as one of those sun-warmed tomatoes.

—Hadley Dyer

Now I see the secret
of making the best
person: it is to grow in
the open air and to
eat and sleep with
the earth.

—Walt Whitman

