

The secrets of nanna's recipe books

By Jo Wilson-Ridley, Coleambally

For Christmas, my mother gave me the remaining handwritten recipe books that were lovingly penned by her long-departed mother. Little remains in my memory of Nanna, but enduring are images of her preparing food. I recall chocolate shortbread biscuits that began as little dumplings on baking trays before spreading into delicious smelling treats. Christmas cakes of brandy-soaked fruit dotted with sparkling red and green glacé cherries. My favourite recipe to watch her prepare were the fancy meat pasties. She would rhythmically roll and cut the pastry, fill it with chunks of meat before delicately folding the pastry over to make pillows of food. But it was the way she would use her thumbs to crinkle the edges of the pasties to create a pretty frill that converted me to a lifelong desire to cook.

When I first left home for University, I was petrified at the loss of access to my mum's Women's Weekly Index Cooking Cards. I spent a whole weekend frantically copying out all my favorite recipes into a shabby, spiral-bound

notebook. Throughout my Uni years the notebook grew with recipes collected from colourful characters and memorable dinner parties, with entries such as 'Stephanie's Boiled Egg Meatloaf', 'Mandy's Hungarian Stuffed Red Capsicum', and my most treasured acquisition — 'Colin's Barely Cooked Chocolate Fudge Cake.'

At some point the recipe book transformed into an all-purpose note keeper, listing names and phone numbers of potential dates, storing tickets from movies and newspaper clippings of trivia that captured my interest. In short, the recipe book had turned into a makeshift time capsule, mirroring the essence of those early years forging a new, independent life in the city.

Sifting through the contents of my Nanna's recipe books, I'm struck by its similarities with my first handwritten recipe book. Sure, her books are littered with old fashioned recipes using dated names such as Butterscotch Meringue Fingers, Chocolate Devil's Cake and Coffee Butter Pyramids, and I'll have a time of it converting the expired ounces

and pounds measurements into my familiar metric system but, like my little time capsule, her recipe books have been filled with delightful and unexpected surprises, helping me to connect with Nanna's life.

Like my book, there are constant references to recipes inherited from friends — Ruth, Jean, Deirdre and the odd reference to Cadbury's. I've learnt that I completely inherited my love of sweet baking from Nanna, along with my love of newspaper clippings. While most of Nanna's clippings concentrate on baking, they do provide a window into the media of her day.

Some memorable lines from her clippings have included 'the very thing to please the man of the house — so make it a must on next week's menu', and, 'for that occasion when only the best will do!' And I can safely guess what Nanna was doing at 3.30pm on 12 July 1960 from the typed recipes supplied by Sydney Gas Company noting this was when 'Gas Cooking' was on with Clare Davis on TCN Channel 9. I'm just not sure which of Clare's featured recipes Nanna was interested

in — the Sago Plum Pudding, Waldorf Pudding or the Orange Sauce.

Like my recipe book, Nanna's books expanded to include information from other aspects of her life — instructions for knitting slippers, a TAB trifecta ticket and a hand-swiped Medicare form. But what caused more than a giggle was discovering names and phone numbers jotted throughout her books, sometimes males. The name begging for further investigation is noted as a cadet journalist with the Australian Broadcasting Commission!

Opening this present on Christmas Day, I had initially felt this would be my chance to carry on the baking traditions of Nanna. Upon closer inspection, I've realised I've become the custodian of these precious slices of her life. Most of all, it has inspired my New Year's resolution to start hand-recording memories and favourite meals in the empty recipe Journal sitting on my bookshelf, with the most suitable of titles — 'Recipes My Mother Gave Me'.

FIRST STEPS

- An introductory DVD, *The Making of a Sustainable Farmers' Market*, is available from the Australian Farmers' Markets Association website: www.farmersmarkets.org.au
- For more information about farmers' markets, contact Jane Adams on Ph: 02 9360 9380 or email: jacom@bigpond.net.au



Market to market:

Tips for shopping in a farmers' market

- Early birds catch... the best pick!
- Be a trolley dolly — and fill it full of local fresh produce
- Or take some sturdy bags — many markets are plastic bag free
- Taste it — try before you buy!
- Stop and ask — farmers will be delighted to tell you about their produce — or new varieties and how to cook them
- Take the kids — they love the chance to sample healthy fresh food

A new approach to farm produce marketing

By Tom Braz, NSW DPI

Farmers looking for innovative alternatives to maintain their viability are coming up with a range of creative and successful solutions to market their products.

Some producers are going back to basics and returning to traditional local marketing by selling their produce through farmers' markets, while others are harnessing the internet.

Both options connect producers directly with consumers and allow producers to set their own price.

The Herdshare concept is a unique example operating in Queensland and on the NSW North Coast that combines both approaches. Consumers can buy a share in a dairy cow through the Herdshare cooperative website that entitles them to a share of the milk produced by their cow.

Consumers have the choice of having their milk portions supplied as milk, cream, or butter at local farmers' markets. A 10 per cent share would entitle the shareholder to that percentage of the unprocessed milk produced by their cow, which is about 14 L a week. The consumer pays for their share and additional management fees. Herdshare claims that the overall cost is equivalent to buying organic dairy products.

Moppity Meats is another farm business making the most of the internet to deal directly with consumers. Run by the Bowman family since 2007, Moppity Meats markets lamb and beef produced on their property between Harden and Young.

The meat is processed at the nearby Cootamundra abattoir. Consumers order their meat online and the order is delivered weekly to their door at no additional cost as boxed cuts in NSW metropolitan areas.

According to the Bowmans, a premium product with complete traceability back to the farm is supplied at a competitive price.

Phillipa and Simon Noble, farmers on the Victorian side of the Murray River near Corowa, market lamb directly to consumers through a grower marketing group operating a similar business to the Bowmans.

In addition, diversity is a strategy the Nobles have adopted to ensure their viability. Their family-run 160 ha property includes an aquaculture enterprise producing Murray cod mainly for the restaurant market. The aquaculture enterprise is integrated with the Nobles' prime lamb, cattle, linseed, field pea, walnut and timber production, along with two holiday cabins on the river.

Water destined for irrigating the Nobles' crops, pastures and farm forestry plantations is first used for aquaculture production where it is passed through tanks housed in two environmentally controlled fish barns. Thinnings from the expanding farm forestry enterprise are burned to heat water for the aquaculture enterprise, while the mature timber is to be sold as high quality saw logs or premium poles.

Simon Noble's advice to anybody looking to diversify is to first do their homework, then take the plunge. He believes there are producers making good money out of direct marketing and alternative industries that did their research and started small and have become multi-million dollar businesses.

As the experiences of the Nobles, the Bowmans and Herdshare demonstrate, alternative marketing strategies and diversification can allow family farmers to move from being price takers to price setters and reap significant benefits. ■

Australian food and drink

Source: Australian Government Cultural Portal (www.culture.gov.au)

Before white settlement, Aboriginal people survived off the native plants and animals of the Australian environment for thousands of years. Across the many different environments of Australia, they knew how to find food and water.

Native mammals and birds such as kangaroo, wallaby and emu were regularly hunted and killed. Although animals were sometimes thrown straight onto the fire for cooking, there was a variety of preparation and cooking techniques.

Other foods that seem less palatable to modern urban Australians — such as witchetty grubs, lizards, snakes and moths — were greatly valued.

Bush foods such as berries, roots and nectars were a vital part of the Aboriginal diet in many areas. Often these required advanced preparation techniques to neutralise toxins and make them palatable and nutritious.

In certain coastal areas shellfish were plentiful and easily harvested. Aboriginals also caught fish in the oceans and rivers using hooks, spears and fish traps.

Aboriginal groups would often travel from season to season moving to where they knew various food sources would be available. One such source was the annual Bogong moth migration to NSW.

The more bountiful the area a tribe lived in, the less nomadic they were forced to be. Desert dwellers may have been on the move constantly searching for food, while coastal tribes may have remained reasonably static.

Certain Aboriginal groups did more than just survive — they thrived. Some white explorers reported meeting groups of Aboriginals from time to time that appeared especially healthy and well-fed.

But living off the land also meant that from area-to-area and season-to-season there were also times of hardship.

Crazy about... cow careers



While their friends are stressing out about their future, two 16-year-old girls from Illawarra Christian School would rather think about cows. Emma Visser and Jet Smith, both in year 11, have taken up school-based traineeships with dairy farmers in Jamberoo NSW, opening the door to a vast choice of dairy careers.

While her friends are scared by a workless future, Emma has confidence: 'My friends think I'm crazy and don't see why I want to do it. But they are not sure what they want in the future, and I am.'

And while Jet's friends are obsessing about looks and boys, she has a different outlook: 'I'm getting out and getting dirty.

I come home covered in cow poo and tales of how brave I am. I love it.'

Emma explained her career choice. 'I don't like being in a classroom, sitting down and doing assessments. I prefer to be outside and doing something hands-on and practical.'

And her involvement attracted Jet to do dairy... and also love it.

The pair has just spent the Sydney Royal Easter Show promoting the industry and their future careers.

The girls' stories began when local dairy farmer, Lynne Strong, visited the school as part of the Cows Create Careers program.

Emma said: 'After hearing Lynne speak, and being involved in calf rearing for a few weeks as part of Cows Create Careers, I decided to ask Lynne if I could do work experience with her. I really enjoyed having contact with the calves and wanted to do more.'

The work experience led to a part-time job. Then Lynne offered Emma a traineeship in agriculture, which she is undertaking as part of her Higher School Certificate.

The traineeship provides basic farm knowledge covering all aspects of agriculture from fencing to cattle handling to milking. The practical work is reinforced with technical study units through the TAFE College at Nowra.

'I gave up one school subject to do two units in a Certificate II in Agriculture. The school has allocated time for me to do the study and assignments. It all helps me understand about cows and calving and other livestock,' said Emma.

'I work on the farm on weekends and holidays and just love it. I don't want to go to uni at the moment. I'd like to stay at TAFE and do Certificate III or IV in Agriculture.'

Jet said: 'After two weeks of work experience on Lynne's farm learning the basics, Lynne found me a part-time position on Hillview Dairy with Alan and Leesa Swan.

'I decided to do the traineeship to further increase my knowledge. I'm doing a hands-on subject, I get time to

study at school, my farm work will be assessed later and my final assessment will contribute to my university admission index, so if I want to study in the future, I can.'

It is not just the farm work that has captured Jet's enthusiasm; she's also interested in the various activities that Lynne undertakes as a rural educator.

'Lynne has got me into Picasso Cow and events management,' said Jet. 'I love helping with setting up and talking to people about the various programs and the dairy industry. I'm learning more about dairy all the time.'

The girls are enjoying their farm experience and appreciate the opportunity they've been given.

'Not many people get to do this sort of thing or have this opportunity,' said Jet. 'We have just spent five days at the Sydney Royal Easter Show. We work hard on the farm but are well-paid and well looked after. Lynne is making adventures in agriculture every day, which people take on board, and we are a part of it, too.'

'Lynne is also mentoring our rural youth network, Dairy Youth Australia (DYA), of which we are events manager and secretary.'

DYA was formed in 2007 with two key objectives: to build the confidence and leadership skills of the committee members and to develop design and project and events management skills.

Keen to share their new-found knowledge and fun experiences, Jet and Emma have created their own education series for kids from K to 12. You can see the *Jet & Emma Get Down & Dirty on the Farm* series on the DYA website at: www.cloverhilldairies.com.au/dairyyouthaustralia.html.

This information is also available through LandLearn NSW, a statewide schools education program about primary industries, at: www.landlearnsw.org.au ■

Feeding young children can be a challenge. Toddlers often have small appetites and very definite likes and dislikes. Many parents are worried about the kinds of foods to feed toddlers. Is family food OK or should special food be prepared?

Home-cooked foods

Encourage your child to eat home-cooked foods, as long as they're not loaded with sugar or salt. Sugary foods and drinks can decay young teeth and salty foods can put a strain on their kidneys. Not adding sugar or salt to your toddler's food will help them learn to appreciate natural tastes.

Think like a toddler!

Coping with small appetites and food fads can be a real trial. As with any problem involving young children, it's worthwhile reminding yourself about the way toddlers think and feel. Toddlers are beginning to discover their world — they are finding out what pleases them and what upsets them. They are also able to make their own decisions. Not wanting to do 'this' and only liking 'that' is a way for toddlers to show their independence.

Major battles often involve food. Young children like to make choices about the food they want, and when they want it. These decisions can conflict with parents' wishes. The resulting battles disrupt family routines and make mealtime unhappy events.

How do eating problems begin?

Surprisingly, most toddler feeding problems start with the parents. Adults can have unrealistic ideas about how much and what kind of food young children need. Yes, it is worrying when your toddler seems to be eating less now than when they were a baby but it's

important to understand the food needs of your growing child.

The amount of food children need depends on the speed at which they grow. A six-month-old baby will gain one kilogram every eight weeks. But toddlers grow very slowly and could take even six months to gain one kilogram. This is why babies have large appetites and toddlers don't seem to eat very much. Toddlers don't eat much because they don't need much — despite the fact they're on the go all day.

Don't be tempted by non-nutritious snacks!

Understandably, parents become worried that their toddlers will get sick when their appetites become small. Sometimes, in a desperate attempt to make sure children 'don't starve', parents offer sugary or salty snacks throughout the day. Watching the kids fill up on non-nutritious snacks may fool Mum and Dad into thinking that the children are at least eating something, but the situation rarely improves. Toddlers become less inclined to eat family food when they get tempting snacks all day.

If your child's refusing food, try to:

Offer meals at regular times in a relaxed and happy atmosphere. If your child rejects the food, calmly clear it away. Serve smaller helpings rather than large ones, as children can ask for seconds. Most food can be safely kept in the fridge and offered later. Try not to bully or fuss: this can easily make the situation worse. Keep offering new food even if your child rejects it at first. Food often needs to be familiar before it is tried.

Comfort yourself with the following thoughts:

☺ Healthy children eat when

they're hungry and usually not before.

- ☺ A child who refuses to eat is not hungry and therefore doesn't need food.
- ☺ No healthy child has ever starved to death from stubbornly refusing food.

Convince yourself of these facts. It will make it easier to stop filling your child up with non-nutritious snacks. And avoid bribing — it will only encourage your child to reject food. Children quickly learn that they can manipulate parents by refusing food.

Check the amount of fruit juice, milk, cordial or other fluids that your toddler is drinking. Large amounts of fluid (more than 1000 mL) throughout the day will take the edge off any appetite.

How do you handle food fads?

Some toddlers have times when their diets become very limited. They will only eat foods prepared or presented in a certain way. They may develop strong likes and dislikes, which frequently change. Days of only cheese and tomato may be followed by a hatred of everything except banana and bread. These food fads are very common and are probably used by children to show their independence. Food fads are rarely a danger to health: they change so frequently that the diet eventually becomes quite varied. It's usually easier for parents to play along with harmless food fads rather than fight them.

No single food is essential to a child's diet and a substitute for refused food can easily be found. Here are some examples:

Alternatives to milk

Milk is an excellent source of calcium and protein for children.

But many other foods contain calcium and protein such as: cheese — soft cheeses, e.g. cottage or ricotta cheese, which can be mashed into foods like potato and banana or hard cheeses, e.g. cheddar; calcium-fortified soy milk; yoghurt mixed with dried or mashed fruit; milkshakes; ice cream; custards; or milk puddings. These foods all contain calcium and protein. Even the milk added to cooked dishes like mashed potato or pancakes will contribute calcium and protein.

Alternatives to vegetables

Vegetables contain valuable vitamins and fibre. But so do fruit and fruit juices. Most children will eat fruit or salad vegetables of one kind or another. These are perfectly acceptable as an alternative to cooked vegetables. If vegetables are a problem, don't bully or bribe. Just encourage your child to eat salad vegetables or some fruit. Fruit juice is also a good substitute for vegetables — but go easy. Half a cup (120 mL) of orange juice contains the same amount of vitamins as a fresh orange — this is all a toddler needs every day.

Alternatives to meat

Meat does contain valuable nutrients like iron and protein, but so do many other foods. Bread, iron-enriched breakfast cereals, green leafy vegetables, lentils and dried beans all contain iron. However, the iron from these foods is not absorbed as well as from meat. Many parents feel frustrated that their child will not eat meat. Don't give up altogether. Try offering small amounts of chopped chicken, steak, pork, lamb, or fish with meals. Mince-meat dishes are often a favourite.

If you combine these foods with foods rich in vitamin C, this helps the iron to be absorbed. Foods rich in vitamin C include oranges, capsicum, strawberries and tomatoes. Protein and iron are found in milk, dairy foods, eggs, peanut butter, baked beans and iron-enriched breakfast cereal.

Remember that it pays to be cunning. The egg, cottage cheese or milk you slip into favourite foods like mashed potatoes, milkshakes, and banana custard is just as nutritious as when it is eaten alone. Don't be afraid to add nutritious foods to favourite dishes.

Make food fun!

There is no reason why mealtime shouldn't be fun. Food should be enjoyed even if it's not all eaten. And enjoying food for a toddler means touching, feeling, and playing with food. This can be messy, but armed with sheets of newspaper to catch the spills it will be fun.

Discovering food means experiencing the tastes and textures that different foods have. Think of the colours, textures and tastes of fruit and vegetables alone! Young children can explore food through play. Fruit and vegetables are easy to make models with. This arouses childhood curiosity and overcomes suspicions and prejudice about particular foods.

Let children help in food preparation. Anyone can tear lettuce for a salad or peel bananas — it's child's play. Allow children to feed themselves. Hands are just as good as spoons, even if they are a bit messier. What about food stories? Stories about food can create great interest in children. Why is milk white? Why is meat brown or cheese yellow? If food experiences have been unpleasant experiences, food

play and stories can bring parents and children together in a happier, less stressful atmosphere.

Set an example

Children are great copiers. They will always want the foods they see you eating, so it's worthwhile to take a look at your own diet. Are you eating too much sugar, salt or fat? Would you confidently feed your child those foods you eat? Good food habits learnt in childhood can last a lifetime.

Disclaimer: This information is for education purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professional to make sure this information is right for your child.

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What's on the menu in school canteens?

By Wendy Watson, Healthy Kids School Canteen Association (SCA)

The last few years have seen changes in foods offered to students in canteens across Australia. It began in NSW, in 2005, when the Fresh Tastes@School, NSW Healthy School Canteen Strategy was introduced to provide guidelines and resources to assist schools to deliver better food choices. Since then, we have seen increased sales of milk, water, fruit and lots of new salad ideas. Teachers are using the canteen more often and parents are asking the canteen manager about foods they have heard their children talk about.

Walk past a canteen window now and you'll see primary school students being offered fresh, seasonal fruit and warm toasted cheese sandwiches. High school canteens often resemble the local café with a counter covered in wraps, foccacia and rolls, which include pesto, hommus and avocado. The menu also includes a range of salads including Caesar, Thai Beef and Greek. Each day, many canteens offer freshly prepared hot foods such as stir-fry noodles, risotto, tacos, pizzas and filled potatoes.

The NSW Healthy School Canteen Strategy categorises food into three groups based on the Australian dietary guidelines and ensures that the canteen menu reflects the message taught in the classroom. It provides a simple, easy to understand spectrum-based model:

- ☺ Green — fill the menu: encourage and promote these foods in the canteen.
- ☺ Amber — select carefully: do not let these foods dominate the menu and avoid large serving sizes.
- ☺ Red — occasional: do not sell these foods on more than two occasions per term.

Why school canteens?

More children are relying on school canteens to provide their lunch, snacks and even breakfast — this can mean the canteen is providing a considerable proportion of their daily nutrient intake. Nourishing food is brain food: it helps concentration in class and assists in success in schoolwork. School canteens need to model healthy eating as it's taught in the classroom. They need to be showing students the importance of limiting 'treat' food.

What help is available?

The Healthy Kids SCA currently supports the Fresh Tastes@School Strategy through a support line (telephone and email), the development of useful resources and the Healthy Kids website: www.healthy-kids.com.au

Saving the world — a garden at a time!

By Lis Bastian, Blue Mountains Permaculture Institute



LIS BASTIAN. PHOTO BY PETER ADAMS FROM THE BOOK STREETWISE

As humanity faces increasing threats from every direction, it is encouraging to know that over 30 years ago a very intelligent design system for integrating productive human settlements within the natural world was developed by Bill Mollison and David Holmgren. Called *Permaculture* (derived from the words 'permanent' and 'agriculture'), this system looks at far more than just gardening — it explores how we can rehabilitate the land, create energy-efficient, low waste and self-reliant communities and ethical and sustainable working environments, protection for the intricate ecosystems on which our lives depend, and become

less vulnerable to economic collapse, peak oil, climate change and resource depletion.

David Suzuki has said that *'what permaculturists are doing is the most important activity that any group is doing on the planet.'*

The other good news is that everyone can practise permaculture — whether you're a broadacre farmer or whether you're an office worker who lives in a small apartment.

On a national level, I believe one of this country's biggest priorities has to be to reforest hills and mountaintops because it is these forests that recharge the watertable, prevent erosion, build soil at the highest point

on the land and moderate climate. Forests help create rain, clean water and influence wind patterns — they are the cornerstone of human survival.

For individuals, however, a garden is a good place to start and to begin to practise some of the underlying ethics and principles of permaculture. Creating small scale food producing 'forests' helps us create healthier, fresher, cheaper food produced with fewer 'food miles'.

Using the inspiration of forests, permaculture gardens are built vertically by stacking as many plants as possible in a small space. Like forests, the goal is to create as close a simulation as possible of a closed system that reuses its own waste and requires few external inputs. The denser the forest the more the garden itself works to provide its own needs. Denser plantings allow little room for weeds, create habitat and provide protection for more vulnerable plants. Using perennial plants as the basis of your garden means that there are permanent plantings protecting and building soil and producing food even without your constant input.

Permaculture systems ideally incorporate animals so that, in the long run, there is no need to import manures and so that animals can assist in pest management and soil cultivation. Animal inputs can be as simple as fish in a pond eating mosquitoes and fertilising water to use on the garden, to guinea pigs, chooks and ducks and ultimately to larger species like horses and cattle.

As in forests, an ideal permaculture system has very few straight lines. By creating curving paths, ponds and garden beds we increase the amount of edges in a garden. The more edges a garden has, the greater its productivity because edges are places where two ecologies meet and plants are able to access resources from both systems.

A permaculture garden also encourages as much diversity as possible so that:

- Plants can support one another in guilds — e.g. a guild of beans, corn and squash allows beans to provide the nitrogen that the hungry corn needs and squashes can provide the groundcover that cools the soil and stops weed growth.

- Umbelliferous plants like dill, Queen Anne's lace and parsley, combined with daisies, clover, cosmos and other flowering plants, attract predator insects like wasps and lady beetles which eat the more harmful pests in the garden like aphids. They also attract bees which help pollinate crops.

- Native vegetation like wattles, grevillea and hakea provide habitat for small native birds which eat garden pests. Wattles also act as nursery plants to help other plants establish — they provide wind protection and fix nitrogen in the soil, so are ideal to plant in an orchard area.

- By not putting all your eggs in one basket your crops are less vulnerable to disease or pest attack — e.g. planting a few varieties of potato means that at

least one variety might flourish even if another succumbs to disease or adverse weather conditions.

Permaculture also recognises that our very survival relies on the health of our soils. Our soils are protective sponges that store and cleanse water, provide nutrients to plants and are home to more organisms than the whole of the oceans and surface of the earth combined. They need organic matter, water and air to keep these living organisms alive. In a permaculture garden paths are crucial so that we can avoid walking on and compressing this home to so many living creatures. Green manures (plants that fix nitrogen and are then turned back into the soil before seeding) provide air, organic matter and nutrients to help build soil. Compost reuses waste to build soil and, combined with mulches, helps to cover and protect this life-filled sponge. In a permaculture garden, soil is rarely turned or left bare.

Ultimately, permaculturists understand that the best way to change climate is to create forests — be they small domestic ones or large broadacre ones. It does not take a science degree to realise that standing under a tree is cooler than standing on a large area of concrete or that the air is moister in a 'rain' forest than a desert. We can all help to provide our communities' needs and begin to reverse the desertification of this driest inhabited continent — a garden at a time. ■

For more information about permaculture and to find out about a range of accredited courses, contact Lis Bastian at the Blue Mountains Permaculture Institute on Ph: 02 4787 7533 or go to: www.bmpi.com.au

Hawkesbury Harvest

By David Mason, NSW Department of Primary Industries



A community-based project improving the economic sustainability of local agriculture, Hawkesbury Harvest is the 'local' ingredient of Sydney's dynamic food and wine culture. It facilitates access to nutritious, safe foods while developing the opportunity for agri-based tourism.

The Hawkesbury Harvest project began back in 2000 in response to a range of social and economic concerns including the lack of viability of small farm production in the Sydney Basin, the increasing obesity epidemic and the loss of agricultural land to urban development. More recently the organisation is increasingly being viewed by the Sydney community as an appropriate local/regional response to concerns such as food security and global warming.

The Hawkesbury Harvest seeds were sown by Governor Lachlan Macquarie when he created the five Macquarie Towns of Windsor, Richmond, Castlereagh, Wilberforce and Pitt Town between 1810 and 1820. Soon extensive farming fed the infant colony, taking advantage of the fertile soils of the Hawkesbury–Nepean River system. The seed lay undisturbed for the ensuing 120 years, during which time agriculture became the

dominant economic force of the nation.

However, from the 1940s onwards things began to change. The rich agricultural environment of the Sydney Basin was moving into an era of slow and steady sterilisation through subdivision for urban development. Also, as the second half of the 20th century progressed, the supermarket system began to emerge as the dominant force in the food chain. This coincided with the loss of direct connection between people and the farmers who grew the food they ate. Small farm holdings in the Sydney Basin were under extreme pressure from increased competition and reduced power to determine price and thus incomes.

The effect of all of this on the wider community was that community health interests were fighting a losing battle against the effects of changes in the food system. These effects are believed to play a role in the disturbing increases in lifestyle diseases such as diabetes and obesity and

the increasing exclusion of the more disadvantaged within the community from access to fresh local food.

These concerns were the catalyst for a community meeting held in May 2000 in a packing shed of an orange orchard on the banks of the Hawkesbury–Nepean at Castlereagh. The purpose of that meeting was to determine how the small farm local agriculture and food related industries could achieve or enhance viability in the Hawkesbury area. During the meeting the Hawkesbury Harvest seed literally burst into life. The conditions needed for galvanising people into action had finally reached critical mass.

The first shoot to emerge was the Farm Gate Trail — a hybrid activity created by the integration of agriculture with the tourism and the hospitality industries. Other shoots have since emerged including open farm days, farmers' markets and a provedore service.

Today, agricultural production in the Hornsby, Baulkham Hills and Hawkesbury council areas is estimated at \$502 million. Through Hawkesbury Harvest visitors to the region have the opportunity to learn about and experience the abundance of the Hawkesbury. In this way they play a unique role in ensuring the viability and sustainability of farms in the region.

For more information go to: hawkesburyharvest.com.au

Food for the soul

market place happenings...

On a recent trip to India I was awakened to a different culture. I was in awe of the happenings and at times realised this culture was not too different from my own. My journey was a textile tour taking me to many villages out in the desert. On our arrival we were always welcomed with a cup of chai tea. The sharing of the tea brought many smiles to everyone's faces.



During my stay in Jodhpur I ventured into the everyday market place. I found myself a little corner and watched the people going about their daily tasks. The women in their beautiful saris, baskets over their arms, wandered down the street to the market place where they met up with friends, obviously chatting about occurrences at home, laughing and nodding at what the others had to say. There were mothers shopping for dinner for their family, getting the best deal on their vegies, cows were wandering by, and people on their motorbikes and tuk-tuks were beeping their horns navigating the narrow streets.

I felt privileged to observe these activities and realised food brings people together, and in sharing joy and happiness, whether we live in Australia or India, we all show we care for and welcome others by doing the best we can to provide. So bring on the hospitality, make all feel welcome and share what you have. The world would be a better place if we all lived this way.

Maree Hornery, Tichborne

food and traditions...

Everybody's family has traditions and requirements where food is concerned and often there are rituals that go with the sharing of food. A tradition, followed by many families over the years, is the hiding of coins in the Christmas pudding, which was believed to bring good luck to the receiver. In the Gold Rush days in Australia a small gold nugget was sometimes hidden for the same reason. I don't know what is used these days or even if the tradition is still followed. I hope so, because it was always with great excitement that the children looked for the coveted coin.



In my family a tradition has grown around the Christmas dinner. Many years ago some relatives in Canada sent a beautiful candle decorated with maple leaves and other Canadian plants. This became the family candle and is always lit at special family gatherings like Christmas. A further development of this tradition was started when, at our granddaughter's naming ceremony, a special candle for her was lit from the family candle.

Patricia White, Fairy Hill

\$5 chickens — a gift of life

Next time you're looking for a unique gift why not try TEAR Australia's World's Most Useful Gift Catalogue. You simply purchase a 'gift of life' in the name of the receiver. The \$5 Chickens in India gift covers the cost of a pair of chickens. It will assist a poor family to start their own flock, so they can enjoy a healthier diet and earn an income from selling meat and eggs. The eggs will provide a family from a poor community with extra protein, vitamins and minerals in their diet, while the surplus can be sold in the market for a regular source of income.

For more information or to give a gift, go to: www.usefulgifts.org or call Toll free 1800 244 986

THE CRUSTY LOAF

I must have two of the crusty loaf
Yes! slices two, I must have both.
One I know is never enough,
Although my diet's really tough.
I hurry past the baker's shop
In case the smell should make me stop
Of loaves and loaves of fresh baked bread
To open my purse and turn my head.
I swear to myself I'll never eat
Or go down that same silly street.
My willpower weakens in hot pursuit
Of luscious bread instead of fruit.
I've put the loaf out of sight
In darkened cupboard away from light
But I know it is just sitting there
With the breadknife's winking stare
Just waiting for me to take one slice
But then two, hmmm — would be nice?
No crusty bread for my tea,
No sandwiches filled for me,
The loaf, rounded lush and brown,
Is waiting for me, just down town.
One slice gets to two and then before I'm through
The little end knob sits lonely there
And looking at it I just can't bear
So I pop it in to seal the deal
And enjoy again my crusty meal!

Bett Taylor, Kyogle

www.backyardchickens.com

BackyardChickens is packed with information to help you raise, keep, and appreciate chickens. You'll find information on Raising Chickens 101 for the most basic information on why and how to raise chickens or you can tour the Learning Center which has information about raising your backyard flock, including information about chicken coops, hatching chicken eggs, feeding chickens, and chicken predators. You'll also find a community forum where you can ask questions and share your experiences.



Putting food into our mouths is the most frequent voluntary action humans do at least three times every day. But how much thought is given to the origin, freshness, quality and the nourishing capacity of these foods?

Over the past 30 years, the food industry has become big business, especially in Western economies. Back when I studied and practised naturopathic medicine, one of my first learnings was the intimate and intrinsic link between healthy functioning [human] bodies and the fuel which is fed into this amazing organism.

The more processed a food is the more de-natured it becomes, thus providing energy-dense but nourishment-free calories. When we talk of malnutrition, it is rife in Western societies, and not only where poverty prevails. The majority of obese people are suffering from malnourishment but it manifests in a different way — think mental illnesses, especially.

True nourishment starts in the soil — soil quivering with fungi, nematodes, earthworms, glomalin, carbon, fulvic and humic acid and a host of leaping-with-life below-ground critters, many which are yet to be identified and named. When plants are grown in such soils, they are healthy, robust and contain the minerals, trace elements, vitamins, fibre and goodness our bodies need to flourish.

'Foods' grown in chemical-laden monocultures and lifeless landscapes lack the qualities of the same foods grown in poly culture systems so is it any wonder animals — then humans — eating this often processed 'stuff' are malnourished?

Remedy? Eat as many raw and minimally processed foods as possible. Buy only unprocessed products from growers whom you know and therefore will give you information as to HOW the foods have been grown. How many farming families grow their own foods these days? Even in the country, growing food is becoming a lost survival skill.

The human body is a miracle and we need to honour it by choosing only the most nourishing and fresh foods we can source — nourishing our people, nourishing our landscapes and nourishing our planet.

Pennie Scott, Bush Goddess Foods



childhood memories

When I think of family meals from my childhood, I remember: burnt sausages on Featherstone beach covered in sand whipped up by the wind; Christmas parties — when the crippled children's group would come to our house along with Santa and enough ice-cream tubs to make 50 kids sick; and fruit from our orchard — blood plums, greengage plums, apricots from a 100 year old tree, green walnuts thrown from the top of a huge tree with enough force to injure a sibling. When I think of food again, I think of Mr Rowe — taking us to his beehives to collect honey. And doing fractions in class with blocks of chocolate.

Kim Currie, Orange

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

We need to take care
 With the purchase of food,
 From fresh and organics
 To dates when they are used.
 The ingredients used
 May need some attention
 For those people around us
 Who have allergic reactions,
 So please read the list
 Of what the products contain.
 They occasionally vary
 Or perhaps change the names.
 Good food is important
 For health of all ages:
 From adult bone structure
 To our children's stages.
Jean Opperman, Pascoe Vale

For our family, food is a celebration of life.
 The fuel for living,
 the sit-down intimacy of celebration!

Bett Taylor, Kyogle



Lending a hand...

practical tips to help bush fire survivors

Canberra woman Liz Tilley and her husband John Flannery and their three children lost their home in the January 2003 fire storm. They moved back into their rebuilt home in August 2004. She has penned the following 'tips,' based on her experiences.

As a survivor of the January 2003 fire storm in Canberra, my heart goes out to those who lost loved ones, homes, pets and a lifetime of memories in the 2009 Victorian fires.

As I sit watching news coverage, with my heart racing and my body shaking slightly as I remember the fear, the flames, the heat, the smoke and the feeling that I would probably not get out alive, I also remember in the days, weeks and months after the fires what support we needed and valued.

A great relief effort is one that is based on the experiences of previous disasters, and yet, after the Canberra bushfires, we were so often 're-inventing the wheel'. I can't bear to see those victims in Victoria not benefit from what we learned in Canberra.

While the aid agencies swing into action and governments put their disaster planning into action, how can the public and the Victorian relief effort help?

What the surviving victims need, both in terms of donations, and physical and emotional support, will come in phases. So here are my tips for a 'great' relief.

Donate cash

Every little bit counts. If every person in Australia donated just five dollars, imagine what a difference it would make.

Basic essentials

Only donate items that are new or of good quality. Don't slow down the relief effort by having the team receiving the donations have to sort through linen, clothing or manchester that is soiled, torn, buttons missing or otherwise damaged in any way. It's better to donate one item that is new or in good condition.

Think of the things you need every day such as toiletries, pyjamas, work and casual clothes, shoes and socks, watch, wallet, handbag, keyring, hat, sunscreen, etc. These people have nothing. While they will receive immediate assistance in the form of cash and gift vouchers, I remember that every day there was something I needed and didn't have. Within the first few days we needed notepads and pens just to deal with the paperwork and the insurance company.

Needs change over time; as people move into temporary

accommodation they'll need cooking utensils, pots and pans, bowls and plates, cups, cutlery, kitchen knives, furniture, beds... the list is endless.

With the colder weather people will need winter clothes — warm tops, coats, hats and scarves — blankets, electric blankets and heaters. I remember the day the weather suddenly turned cold in Canberra and no-one in the family had a warm top to wear.

Kits

If you're thinking of what else to give, put together a first aid kit, or an office kit (sticky tape, scissors, notepads, pens, stapler, etc.), or a toiletry bag (toothpaste and toothbrush, nail scissors, deodorant, shampoo, razors, etc.), or a make-up kit (foundation, lipstick, eye shadow, moisturiser, mascara, etc.), or a hair care kit for a child (brush, hair ties, shampoo, etc.), or a sports kit for a child (drink bottle, hat, lunchbox, sunscreen, soccer ball), a kitchen kit (mixing bowls, cooking utensils, kitchen knives, etc.), a tool kit (hammer, screwdrivers, hacksaw, tape measure, etc.) — these will be much appreciated.

Make something

Some of our most treasured items are the ones that were made, with love, by complete strangers — the quilt that was one of the hundreds that arrived from all over Australia, the hand-knitted rugs that my children like to snuggle under in winter. If you make jewellery, make a few pairs of earrings or a necklace. If you make toys, make something for the children who have lost theirs. If you knit, make a winter scarf. If you sew, make some table placemats or a beautiful table runner. If you're an artist, paint a picture or frame a drawing. I still find it incredibly moving that people cared enough to put time and love into making something that has now become a new family treasure for us.

Grow something

Those that remain, and those that decide to rebuild, face a blackened, denuded landscape. If you live within reasonable distance of the bushfire area, pot some seedlings and start growing some vegetation to help rejuvenate the gardens. Contact your local nursery, landcare or