



Mindful Eating

Nourishing All Life While Nourishing Ourselves



From the January 2023 issue of *SPARK*, the New York Yearly Meeting newsletter: nyym.org/spark

The Minute That Inspired This Issue of *Spark*

The Friends in Unity with Nature committee of Fifteenth Street* developed a Minute on Mindful Eating and Compassion for Animals during the summer of 2021. It was adopted by Fifteenth Street Meeting, and subsequently by New York Quarterly Meeting. The committee trusts that reflection about, and ministry on, the minute will support Friends in daily practices of mindful eating and inspire wider actions that foster compassion for animals and care for the Earth.

The minute then came to Witness Coordinating Committee, where it

was agreed that, with minor changes, we would bring it to Spring Sessions 2022. The minute was first presented during a business session Saturday afternoon, where ministry was shared proposing further changes. A small group met during a worshipful gathering Saturday evening, resulting in the following minute. When the revised minute was presented during Sunday's business session, we were still unable to reach unity. Because our yearly meeting clearly needed further opportunities for reflection, it was suggested that a special issue of *Spark* be used as one forum for discussion and discernment.

** – Friends in Unity with Nature Committee of Fifteenth Street Monthly Meeting: Sally Arteseros, Mary Grimes, Christine McVay, Katherine Mylenki, Janet Soderberg, and Helen Saffran*

How Can Every Meal We Eat Be Like Saying Grace?

GUEST EDITORS:

Margaret McCasland

co-clerk, Earthcare Working Group & Climate Justice Working Group

Rebekah Rice

co-clerk, Witness Coordinating Committee & Friends in Unity with Nature Regeneration Group

Friends sought a deeper conversation once it became clear we were not yet ready to reach unity on what mindful eating might comprise. Food is very personal, but as Friends we can respect each other's differences at the same time as we seek common ground around more systemic and

spiritual aspects of food.

People submitted carefully discerned spiritual **testimonies** on mindful eating, **stories** about their personal relationship with food, and pieces on **regeneration**: how food related practices affect our Earth.

We were surprised to not have received articles on food justice, food processing, bioengineered foods, animal cruelty and concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), industrial agriculture, or relevant public policies.

All of us want to nourish our bodies and our souls while we nourish our planet, but we use a mix of criteria when deciding what to eat. For some, mindful eating requires an understanding of where our food came from. Some people focus on food miles and

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Revised, Proposed Minute on Mindful Eating and Compassion for Animals

Let us be mindful of what we are eating. John Woolman, the eighteenth century Quaker preacher, wrote:

“That as by [God's] breath the flame of life was kindled in all Animal and Sensible Creatures, to say we Love God as unseen, and at the same time exercise cruelty toward the least creature moving by his life, or by life derived from Him, was a contradiction in itself.”

Today's factory farming practices often treat animals, which are sentient beings, with cruelty. And many such animals end up as meat for human consumption. In the face of such mistreatment, we believe it is time to put our faith into action on the issue of animal rights. We encourage our members and attenders to be mindful of the impact of their food choices—choices that may contribute to the suffering of an animal.

As a community we can live our peace testimony by condemning cruelty to animals, being aware of all our food sources, re-evaluating our personal food choices, supporting efforts to help animals, and expressing our support for a more sustainable food system that does not harm our Earth.

Introduction

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pay attention to where their food was produced (see map of the NYC foodshed on this page). For some, the way in which food is grown and the effects on water, sky and land is their dominant concern, with solutions ranging from home gardens to Regenerative Agriculture and Permaculture.

As Michael Pollan wrote in *The Omnivore's Dilemma*:

Imagine for a moment if we once again knew, strictly as a matter of course, these few unremarkable things:

- Imagine if we had a food system that actually produced wholesome food.
 - Imagine if it produced that food in a way that restored the land.
 - Imagine if we could eat every meal knowing these few simple things: What it is we're eating. Where it came from. How it found its way to our table. And what it really cost.
- If that was the reality, then every meal would have the potential to be a perfect meal.

We would not need to go hunting for our connection to our food and the web of life that produces it. We would no longer need any reminding that we eat by the grace of nature, not industry, and that what we're eating is never anything more or less than the body of the world.

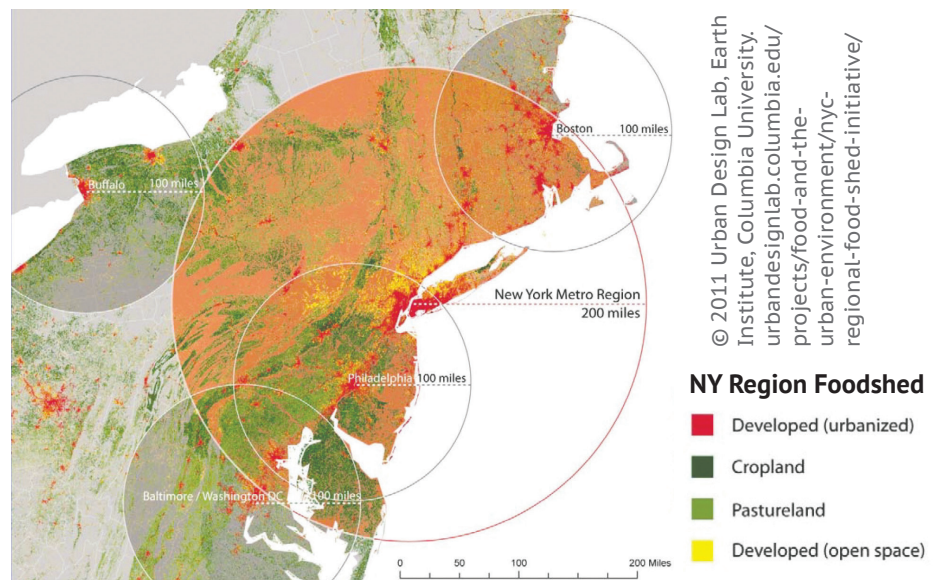
I don't want to have to forage every meal. Most people don't want to learn to garden or hunt. But we can change the way we make and get our food so that it becomes food again—something that feeds our bodies and our souls.

Imagine it: Every meal would connect us to the joy of living and the wonder of nature. Every meal would be like saying grace.



I think we Friends need to develop our testimony of Simplicity to include the ideal of reconnecting with our sources, by getting more of what we need within our home regions. As families, neighborhoods, and meetings, we can grow, buy, or barter for more of our food close to home, and engage in growing practices that preserve the topsoil and the water. [...] We don't see how we deplete distant lands when life necessities are brought in via many middlemen from long-distance.

Bill Cahalan on Simplicity and Right Relationship,
quakerearthcare.org/simplicity-and-right-relationship/



“FOOD MILES estimate certain aspects of the environmental costs directly associated with a food's transport from farmer to consumer. However, just as importantly, Food Miles help describe a FOODSHED. In a manner analogous to a watershed, a Foodshed outlines the area of land supplying food to a given geographical spot. In this little study, we show the location of many of the farms supplying NYC farmers' markets and CSA's. We then consider some of the factors affecting where those farms are located.”

Miles to Go before We Eat: Food Miles and the New York City Foodshed,
https://hvfarmscape.org/sites/default/files/food_miles_redux.pdf

Finding food grown in your foodshed

Local Harvest is a great resource for finding local and regional food. www.localharvest.org

The **Real Organic Project** promotes farming that is both organic and regenerative. www.realorganicproject.org

Cooperative Extension offices usually have guides to local foods. In NYS, visit cals.cornell.edu/cornell-cooperative-extension/local-food-guides

Introduction

Food for all: Personal Choices, Public Policy

Margaret McCasland
Ithaca Meeting

Most of this issue of *Spark* focuses on what we personally eat, but we wanted to also note some of the broader aspects of food systems that provide a context for our personal and corporate witness in the world. Food is fully integrated into our social, cultural, economic and political systems and is thus associated with multiple overlapping concerns. Our testimonies of justice, equality and simplicity (plus Quaker traditions that value ecosystems that are healthy for people and other living things) are interwoven with all aspects of food.

Food is a basic human right.

Every person has the right to healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate food.

“Food deserts” (neighborhoods with limited access to healthy, affordable food) are far too common in communities of color and low-income neighborhoods across the United States. According to a study of the NYC and Hudson Valley Foodshed by Scenic Hudson, “New York City has an estimated \$866 million or more of unmet demand annually for regionally produced food, *with substantial demand coming from underserved communities.*” (See: scenichudson.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Foodshed_Conservation_Plan.pdf)

Food injustice takes many forms and must be addressed in many ways. The human rights of the people who grow, harvest, process, prepare and serve our food are fundamental to our right relationship with food.

The lockdown of all but “essential workers” during the initial response to Covid-19 taught us how dependent we are on people who work in every stage of getting food to our table, but this increased awareness has not resulted in better working conditions or pay for most of them. Likewise, farmworkers received very few accommodations during the 2021 Western North America heat wave, sometimes with fatal consequences.

An especially egregious form of food injustice is the creation of sacrifice zones by governments and corporations on the few remaining lands of indigenous people. In New York State, both the Onondaga Nation and the Mohawk Nation have had ongoing contamination of their food sources from industrial pollution.

Food is personal. Food is very personal. There are many reasons we chose a given food or beverage. Some are based on our own nutritional or emotional needs. Some are moral and relate to fairness for the people who produce our food. Some relate to the ethical treatment of animals. Some decisions are based on ecology.

But we shouldn't have to research everything that we consider ingesting. Organizations like the Environmental Working Group and Seafood Watch produce guides which are helpful, but having to consult the guides still involves time and complex decision-making. (Can I afford the more expensive product? Do I have time to make this recipe from scratch?) Deciding what to eat should be a joy based in gratitude, not a burden based on fear.

What matters most is what we eat most of the time. Cutting ourselves some slack for special occasions and unusual circumstances will give us

more emotional and mental energy to make sure that the majority of our food is in alignment with our values.

There are three main areas we can influence food systems: as consumers, as advocates for better public policies, and through our witness work.

As consumers, the more food we buy directly from farmers and the less we eat highly processed foods based on commodity crops, the faster farmers can transition to more regenerative practices.

As citizens, we can call on local state and federal governments to support farmers, farm workers, and the people who process and prepare our foods. The economics of farming and the quality of life of farm workers are highly influenced by state and federal laws, regulations and policies, which often subsidize unecological and unethical practices. Social policies such as a universal basic income and expanded SNAP benefits can make it easier for everyone to afford healthy food.

Through our witness work, we can support projects locally and around the world that bring food security to communities while growing food in ways that nurture local ecosystems.



Were the walls of our meat industry to become transparent, literally or even figuratively, we would not long continue to raise, kill, and eat animals the way we do.

Michael Pollan, “An Animal’s Place”, *The New York Times Magazine*, November 10, 2002

Testimonies

Mindful Eating, a Journey through Testament

Rebekah Rice
Saratoga Meeting

As co-clerk of Witness Coordinating Committee, a participant in the worshipful changes that were made during Sessions, and an enthusiast of mindful eating, I'm still curious about why we didn't reach unity.

- Are there Friends among us who disagree with John Woolman regarding the flame of life?
- Are there Friends among us who believe factory farming is acceptable?
- Are there Friends among us who do not condemn cruelty to animals?
- Are there Friends among us who don't wish to become aware of our food sources?
- Are there Friends among us who don't wish to re-evaluate our personal food choices?
- Are there Friends among us who don't wish to help animals?

Have you considered your Spirit-led Testimony regarding Mindful Eating?

For me, the personal experiences that I recognize as informing my dialog with Spirit include my connection to Earth and all beings; learning to be a regenerative farmer; becoming healthy after cancer; and providing balanced diets for loved ones including vegans, vegetarians, those with allergies, and those who are meat eaters.



Testimony

Nadine Hoover
Buffalo Meeting

Nadine Hoover, Rebekah Rice, and Gay Howard feel we need to:

- *Eat natural, organic foods, and drink fresh or filtered water to be fully open to Spirit's regenerative, healing power. This means we need to:*
- *Stop eating food that is genetically modified or sprayed with poisons, such as glyphosate. To do this, we need to:*
- *Slow down, plan ahead, and not succumb to the corporate poisoning of our lives.*

On November 13, 2022, Nadine Hoover brought this testimony to Buffalo Friends Meeting for Business who affirmed it for Nadine. Friends expressed concern that not everyone has access to nor can afford organic non-GMO food, and asked for more information and ideas on where to shop.

In Buffalo, local markets, coops, Aldi's, and others carry organic foods. Being organic does not guarantee it is produced in a regenerative manner (watch *Kiss the Ground* — kisstheground.com/support-the-film). Consider purchasing from a

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). Good water filters include Zero Filters (zerowater.com) and Berkey Filters (www.berkeyfilters.com), among

others.

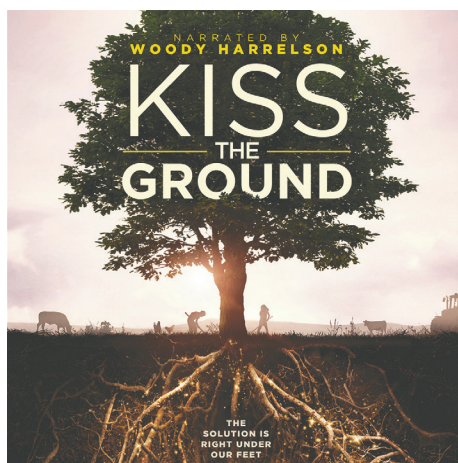
Foods sprayed with glyphosate or other poisons lose the glory of their cellular structures. When magnified 10,000 times, sprayed food cells appear in amorphous, globular patterns, while organic cells appear in spectacular crystal patterns with an inner life and beauty obscured by the blemishes on their surface.

Contemporary obsession with surface appearance is poisoning us. Farmers talk about being horrified at the current practice of spraying grains with Roundup, not only once, but a second time at harvest, especially ones that are genetically engineered. Glyphosate dries out the crop to harvest it sooner than if allowed to die naturally, and ensures against any small green flecks in processed products.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency found glyphosate in 80 to 90 percent of their wheat-based products. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration found 63 percent of corn and 67 percent of soybean products were contaminated. Oats, chickpeas, and lentils had even higher levels. PFAS and PFOS called "forever chemicals" are also pervasive in water supplies and top soil, leaching into food supplies. These chemicals are causing health defects and chronic ailments.

One out of eight women in the U.S. today develop breast cancer. Toxicity in our food and water is draining our energies, stamina, concentration, decision-making, and initiative. I carry the genetic variant PON1, which although it does not predispose me to cancer, means that my body struggles to excrete pesticides and other toxins. I'm a canary in the coal mine. What is

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Testimonies

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killing me will eventually kill everyone.

Our collective blinders to this pervasive violation of Spirit's gifts of life, vitality, and healing shows how corporations have permeated and controlled our lives and society.

NOTE: Glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup and other herbicides, is linked to cancer. However the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency refutes this, protecting corporations such as Monsanto, which developed Roundup, rather than the people. (Monsanto has since merged with Bayer.) The scientific research and legal evidence produced in court cases has led over 40 countries around the world to ban or restrict glyphosate-based herbicides. However Roundup is still the most widely used herbicide in the world. (www.baumhedlundlaw.com/toxic-tort-law/monsanto-roundup-lawsuit/where-is-glyphosate-banned)

To learn more, read the new book, *What Your Food Ate*, by Anne Biklé and David R. Montgomery, or the article "Glyphosate Contamination in Food Goes Far Beyond Oat Products" by the Environmental Working Group (www.ewg.org/news-insights/news/glyphosate-contamination-food-goes-far-beyond-oat-products).



Full-Body Mindfulness

Cai Quirk
Ithaca Meeting

I love food. I love the physical sensations of eating food — the feel, the taste, the smell, even sound and sight. It can provide sensations that I can't

get anywhere else. Eating mindfully has helped me heal from a restrictive eating disorder, and helped me get to this place where I can enjoy food again. Sometimes though, the mindfulness leads to such joy in the sensations that they override listening more deeply to my body's hunger cues; crunchy or spicy snacks are a particular favorite.

This year, I began to transition from the idea of 'mindful eating' to 'full-body mindfulness.' In times where I feel the desire for food, I ask my body where the desire is coming from. Sometimes it truly is hunger, sometimes it is my taste buds which can often be happy with some herbal tea, and sometimes the desire is for sensation. When I release the focus on food as the sole possibility for filling this desire, I can listen more deeply for what my body truly needs in that moment.

Right now I am enjoying the sensations of laying in bed, swaddled in blankets with the computer's weight on top of me. I also find fulfillment in stretching, running my hands over tree bark, back rubs, drinking cold or bubbly water, shaking out laundry, holding a huge breath in and feeling the air pressure, sifting hands through rocks and sand, breaking sticks, and more. Once, when I was helping my godmothers shell beans, I noticed that there was a similar very satisfying sensation to crunching chips: the crackle of the shell, the pop of beans coming out, the dry whisper as each moved through my hands.

Humans used to shell a lot more beans by hand. So much physical stimulation has been removed in this society with many people having less exercise, less physical contact with people, blander food,

more and more desk jobs than physical labor, and machines to do things like wash dishes and laundry. Our houses are made of more limited and uniform surfaces like smooth floors and chairs rather than undulating ground and rough logs to sit on.

Many of us get notably less stimulation than our ancestors did. Many of us don't immediately miss the loss of sensation through modern day conveniences and appliances. Many of us struggle with feeling too tempted by certain kinds of food, but is it always the food we're really craving? What other sensations might nourish deeper longings? What did we each enjoy as kids... swimming, biking, cuddling in bed, the wind or sun on your face?

There are so many incredible sensations to love, yet sometimes I resist that love and joy, worrying that it might turn into a covetousness that takes over my life. I worry I'll focus too much time on outward sensation and not go deeper into spirit or intellect or being productive. I fear nothing will feel like enough even if I give it more time or that it will feel like a waste of time if I do.

And yet, this is where the mindfulness comes in. This is where pausing and taking a moment to breathe, to notice the sensations that are already here, to listen deeply to my body is so important. Many times, in this moment of pause, I realize that I do already have enough sensation, if only I'll let it be enough. And when it isn't, I've learned the stretches and squeezes and jumps that can give me more. Sometimes I even eat potato chips, but when I do, it's because that's exactly what is right for my body in that moment.



Regeneration

Finding our Common Unity

Sheree Cammer
Albany Meeting

Nature has the right to exist. The life in nature is that of God in all. Nature pours out love for us. When we align our energies with the forces of life and wholeness, as one of the council of all beings, we find right relation.

I have been lately focusing the flow of good energy out to unseen many who have lost heart and live under the veil of darkness that George Fox perceived. And, over all, an Ocean of Light.

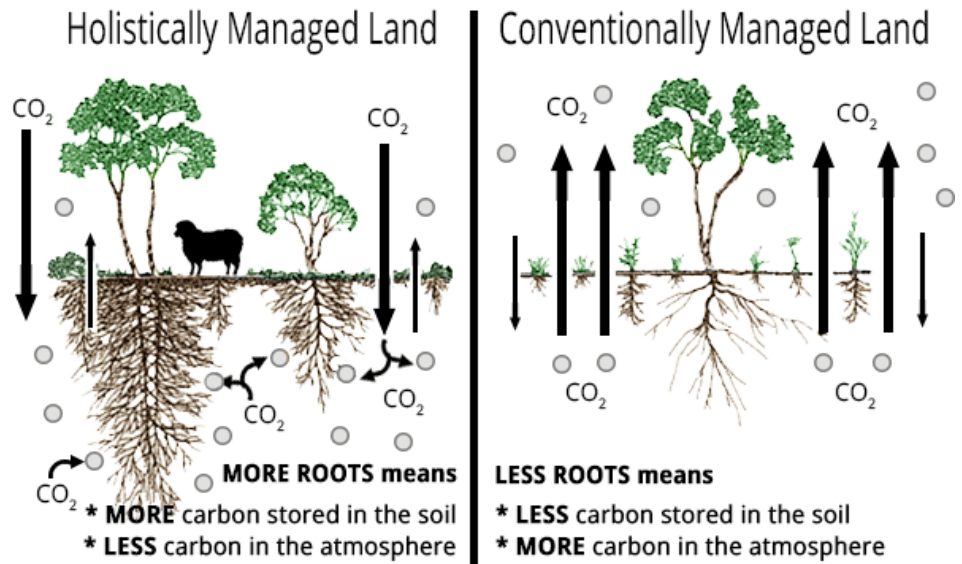
There is not a moment to lose. Joyful work in community lies ahead.

Locally:

- Growing food locally.
- Restoring natural ecosystems that hold onto rainwater and make communities more resilient to drought, floods, heat waves and wildfires.
- Allowing nature to regenerate.
- Designing housing on minimal footprints, using minimal resources, with denser human dwellings.
- Recognizing the rights of nature to exist by learning “enough.”
- Finding our right relation as kin with all life.
- Finding our common unity, living as community where the needs of all are considered.

Globally:

- Regenerating the fertility of our soils holds the key to growing nutrient-dense food for people and pasture for animals.
- Lifeless soils can teem again with



From govschoolagriculture.com/2015/07/24/holistic-management-genius-or-misguided/

Plants and trees pull carbon from the air and down into their roots, feeding microbes, which store the carbon in their bodies unless exposed to the air, where they die. Keeping soil covered and minimally disturbed are key regenerative practices. — *Sheree Cammer*

microbial life.

- Natural landscapes can hold water, streams can run, aquifers can be replenished.
- Deserts can become green.
- The dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico could disappear as nature heals herself from the runoff of synthetic fertilizers.
- Barren, degraded, eroded landscapes can be regenerated to thriving ecosystems that can host plentiful biodiversity.
- Regeneration is life.

Dear Community

Let's share our experiences with regeneration! This could include rewilding a lawn, regenerating dirt into living soil. Our experiences

might include preserving critically significant biodiversity areas and corridors, restoring degraded ecosystems, working with nature to create landscapes to retain water.

What fabulous news that regenerative practices including farming and grazing can turn desert into verdant pastures, alive with streams and wetlands!

May our coming together in this Mindful Eating booklet celebrate a coming back to life, in spirit realizing our connection with all life and each other, linked by each with the All Good, the Infinite, All Powerful.

May we connect deep in this ocean of spirit.

Contact Sheree to learn more about NYYM's Friends in Unity with Nature Regeneration Group.



The Unrealized Radicalness of a Home Garden

Elizabeth Keokosky
Ithaca Meeting

Many of us who have gardens—and many who don't—take gardens for granted. The commonly mentioned advantages are clear enough: fresh vegetables, saving money and being outdoors. Making a political statement is not particularly one of them, but now, I am beginning to realize more and more the radicalness of a home garden. It finds expression in multiple ways.

The Microbiome. My garden has become a portal to a whole, recently illuminated ecosystem—the microbiome of the soil, a community of microorganisms that recycle nutrients and build carbon retention.

I used to feed my plants; now I feed the millions—no, trillions—of microbes who live in the soil layer underlying the plants, the whole mycorrhizal network with its fungi and helper bacteria.

Members of this network—in the miracle of chemical intra-species communication—trade nutrient needs and secret dialogs with plant roots, which, among other things, transmit pathogen defense warnings to other plants. The process is remarkably similar to our own human gut and immune system talking.

Regeneration. A compost pile is a way to propagate more of these microbes, and compost tea makes a fermented addition, both useful in the same way that yogurt and probiotics are to the human gut. Instead of fertilizers and herbicides, I now lug back whatever biomass waste I can lay my

hands on: food scraps, wood chips, chicken litter, and straw. I also buy seeds for cover crops by the pound to keep bare ground active after harvesting. Giving back more than you take out is called “regeneration,” and it is a fantastically optimistic concept to rebuild the health of soil, humans, community and the planet.

Cooperative communities vs. competitive individuals. The symbiotic, cooperative ecosystem known as a microbiome is reshaping what Western cultures have promoted as evolutionary truth. After Darwin sailed on the HMS Beagle and wrote “On the Origin of the Species” explaining natural selection, his basic principles were inappropriately summarized by the term “survival of the fittest.” New biology confirms Darwin’s original principle that evolution is not the survival of the fittest on the individual level but survival of the species at the community level.

Indeed, new understandings about microbiomes have changed what we consider to be an individual. Like the community formed by plants and soil microbiomes, each of our bodies is a community of human cells and the bacteria and funguses in our microbiomes. The more-visible colonies of ants or bees function like a single organism, as do even human cities.

Seeing microbiomes as part of an organism based on cooperation opens us to a more radical, many-layered understanding of the complex challenges and solutions worked out in nature, which resonate with the complex challenges and solutions humans face on a societal level.

Social Darwinism has justified the intense competitiveness of the industrial revolution since the late 1800s.

Today, understanding human society as an organism based on cooperation amplifies the need for partnerships in a complicated global world.

Beyond consumerism. The radicalness of a small home garden also unintentionally turns corporate capitalism on its head. Home gardeners are no longer consumers; they are producers.

Home garden benefits are similar to heating with wood, where the saying goes you get warmed twice: once cutting the cordwood and once heating with it. With gardens, both the exercise and the results make a gardener (and their families) healthier.

We home gardeners are not market driven. Our labor is neither particularly efficient nor specialized. The effort and the rewards are in the realization of the true deliciousness of food grown yourself. Home gardeners don't have to make a monetary profit, although I strongly advocate for reducing expenses, since many things we buy for gardens are unnecessary.

Frugality drives inventiveness. For instance, use home-harvested limbs and vines for support and garden structures, make your own potting soil and only apply amendments at the right time. The longer you garden, the more you find you can make do with what is around you. It's hardly a capitalist mantra.

All of this can give a noticeable boost to your budget, particularly if you grow organically and add up the cost of what comparable purchases would be. A gardener is always learning and is always experimenting.

Abundance happens in a garden. As E.F. Schumacher said, “Small is beautiful,” and this applies to the sustainability and lovely coherence of a home garden. A home

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Regeneration

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garden is a pantry where food is always fresh, transportation costs are negligible and there are no plastic wrappers.

Encourage plants like dill, coriander and parsley, which readily go to seed and come up the following year. Reap the benefits of thyme, sage, mint, chives and many other herbs, which are perennial (also asparagus and rhubarb). Add fruit trees and berries, and take the garden beyond vegetables. Include easy hoops and plastic for grow tunnels and extend the season before and after winter.

Add chickens, and you have an amazing symmetry between egg production, chicken litter, compost and food scraps. Put up some birdhouses and a wide potting tray of water, and your garden also becomes a sanctuary for birds, amphibians and reptiles.

Reciprocity. The last — but not least — radical aspect of gardening is one I am just beginning to comprehend. Reciprocity is about balanced relationships in the Indigenous sense (as practiced by the Haudenosaunee Confederacy of our lovely area of the Great Lakes and the Finger Lakes).

The reciprocity between plants and people should not be a surprise; after all, in the Western scientific narrative, mammals and angiosperms (flowering plants) co-evolved in geological time together. But in the Indigenous narrative, the relationship is even more pronounced. Humans are younger siblings to the plants and animals around them. Humans listen to them and are taught by them. Among the many things they learn is the wisdom of strength, endurance and healing.

More recently, Western innova-

tors have begun taking cues from plants, using biomimicry to come up with better and more sustainable solutions, such as the shape of wind turbine blades, the hooks and loops of Velcro and the medicinal uses of plants.

Gratitude. For Indigenous peoples, learning from plants and animals has been like an ecological, ethical and social glue that holds together their way of living. In harvesting, for instance, they learn to leave the best and never take more than Earth can continue to provide, implicitly acknowledging the needs of future generations of all species.

But, of particular importance to the radicalness of gardens, Indigenous peoples are taught to express gratitude for the gifts nature has provided them and to always give back. It is the application of this radically loving, reciprocal relationship that seems to me the essential piece needed to reverse a self-destructive, Western worldview.

Gratitude for Earth's gifts and understanding our responsibility to return these gifts, to put back more than we take, is the heart of the Honorable Harvest.

RELATED RESOURCES

Koyaanisqatsi: Life Out of Balance.

The impacts of a competitive, individualistic, profit driven Western worldview is well captured in the 1982 movie, "Koyaanisqatsi: Life Out of Balance." The film wordlessly depicts taking and taking until the abundance and beauty of Earth is used up, until there is nothing left to give. Then, and only then, when it is too late, does the importance of reciprocity, of the honorable harvest, become real.

The Honorable Harvest

Excerpt from *Braiding Sweetgrass*
"The Honorable Harvest" chapter in Robin Wall Kimmerer's book *Braiding Sweetgrass* both asks the relevant questions and provides guidelines for us to use when making decisions about food (or anything else we consume):

If we are fully awake, a moral question arises as we extinguish the other lives around us on behalf of our own. Whether we are digging wild leeks or going to the mall, how do we consume in a way that does justice to the lives we take? [...]

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Superorganisms


[H]oney bees ... can be considered superorganisms (the colony itself functions like a single organism). When considering a honey bee colony as a superorganism, each bee within the colony can be likened to a cell within an animal. Bees within a colony work together to perform colony level tasks, just as the cells in a human body work together to build and maintain a functional person. A few basic examples of this are thermoregulation (temperature regulation of the hive), respiration (air exchange into and out of the hive), and reproduction (creation of a new honey bee colony).

— *THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF HONEY BEES*, Ashley N. Mortensen, Bryan Smith, & James D. Ellis; edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/IN1102

Regeneration

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The guidelines for the Honorable Harvest are not written down, or even consistently spoken of as a whole—they are reinforced in small acts of daily life. But if you were to list them, they might look something like this:

- Know the ways of the ones who take care of you, so that you may take care of them.
- Introduce yourself. Be accountable as the one who comes asking for life. Ask permission before taking. Abide by the answer.
- Never take the first. Never take the last. Take only what you need.
- Take only that which is given.
- Never take more than half. Leave some for others. Harvest in a way that minimizes harm.
- Use it respectfully. Never waste what you have taken. Share.
- Give thanks for what you have been given.
- Give a gift, in reciprocity for what you have taken.
- Sustain the ones who sustain you and the earth will last forever. 

Earthcare Grant Supports Nyack Garden

NYYM's Earthcare Fund was pleased to be able to give a grant to the Central Nyack Pollinator Pathway Garden (see "A Little Eden in Nyack" on this page). Here are a few highlights from their application:

A well traveled foot path, which the town had been spraying with the weedkiller Roundup, follows the southern edge of a low income housing project. People walk through here to catch the bus to work, to play

basketball at the community center, to take a stroll with their dogs, and sometimes to do drugs. The housing complex and the surrounding neighborhood is a beautiful mix of people of many colors and backgrounds.

This year, this dusty, burnt earth walkway has been transformed into a vibrant community garden with native plants that are key to supporting native bugs (especially caterpillars), which in turn support native birds.


We also are bringing importance and beauty to a lane that many working people and children walk every day, helping us envision the earth as a nurturing gathering space rather than an abandoned dumping ground. Cultivating this spot as a place of growing beauty shifts our sense of relationship to nature from something someone owns to something we share.

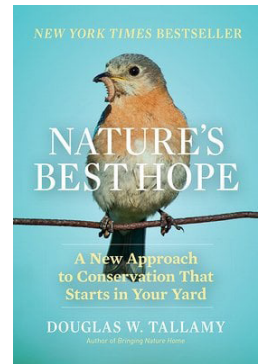
At least 100 people have contributed to the cultivation of the garden. This helps build community resilience; if something happens, neighbors know each other from positive interactions and won't jump to negative assumptions about each other.

By planting some species that are edible to humans, we promote children's understanding that food comes from the plants that grow in the earth while creating a place of harmony and fun for children. Since the walkway cuts through a residential section without being adjacent to a road, children can run the length of the walkway without the danger of cars, giving a feeling of safety and a sense that people, and not just machines, have the

right to pass over the earth.

RELATED RESOURCE:
Douglas W. Tallamy's book, *Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard*, was written for homeowners with yards, to show how they

can turn their yards into conservation corridors that provide wildlife habitats. However the Central Nyack Pollinator Pathway Garden shows that the same principles apply to urban and shared spaces. 



A Little Eden in Nyack

Sylke Jackson
Rockland Meeting

On October 30, 2022, a community in central Nyack celebrated fall with

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Jack-o-lantern festival, Oct. 30, 2022, Nyack, NY. Photo by Eileen Leith.

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a Jack-o'-lantern festival in their new Pollinator Pathway Garden. Here is a report from one of the project's coordinators, Sylke Jackson:

Thank you to all the people who gave your time or funds to make the celebration happen yesterday! We had a wonderful festival that helped spread awareness about the garden and nurtured a deeper connection between the neighborhood and nature. The whole community pitched in (there were 50-100 people who participated through the afternoon and evening), and I heard neighbors saying, "We live across the street from each other but it takes meeting up in the garden for us to catch up!"

I loved watching kids who had never carved a pumpkin before transition from hesitantly contemplating the slimy seeds and fibers inside the pumpkins to squishing the pulp happily through their fingers, pulling out seeds, and even taking some home to grow or roast. This is a personal and intimate lesson on where our food comes from and teaches the importance of the earth and the growing things. Lighting up their jack-o'-lanterns and finding a dark spot to set the glowing pumpkin, munching freshly popped popcorn, and sipping hot cider, the children can feel and taste that the earth is their mama and home.

I feel that as we work on the garden and improve our relations with the birds, and the insects and the growing things and each other, all those beings know that we are working for their good, and appreciate us. And we help make harmony. I am happy to be getting to know you all and to connect in this endeavor! 

Book Review: *What Your Food Ate*

David R. Montgomery and Anne Bikle, Norton, 2022

Review by Rebekah Rice

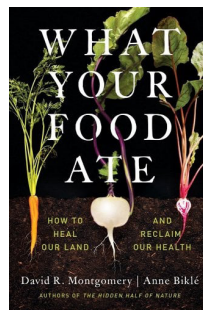
Subtitled *How to Heal our Land and Reclaim our Health*, this engaging and highly readable book takes a deep look at the available research on how the quality of food is affected by soil health, literally exploring how what your food (whether plant or animal) ate affects your health.


How food is grown affects the planet and every living being. This includes you.

The health of a plant grown in soil is affected by the biological life in the soil as the microbes release exactly what the plant needs. When herbicides, fungicides, or insecticides have been applied, the balance in the soil life changes, and fewer nutrients are bioavailable to the plants. Any unbalance in fertilizer can affect bioavailability as well. If soil has lots of organic matter, it does a better job of hosting the microbiome.

What Your Food Ate also explores why meat, dairy, and eggs are actually different if an animal is fed grain and seeds (loaded with omega-6 fats)

rather than grass and forbs (rich in omega-3 fats). Healthy omega-3 fats are dominant in the milk, eggs, and meat resulting from pasture-raised animals. CAFOs (confined animal feeding operations) feed grain and beans and thus result not only in inhumane conditions but also in fats that you should not wish to eat.



Whether you are a vegan, a vegetarian, or an omnivore, you will find detailed information to help you make the best possible choices for Earth and for your own body. 

The Gift of Regenerative Farming

Janet Soderberg

15th St Meeting

*Project Drawdown Solution
Farming Can Sequester Huge
Amounts of Carbon*

(about 23 gigatons of CO₂ by 2050)

My Project Drawdown elevator sales pitch:

Did you know some people think we could solve global warming by allowing the soil to suck up enormous amounts of CO₂?

Yes, really! We're on the edge of a major revolution in farming.

How is it different? Farmers don't plow anymore.

Yes! They no longer till the soil. No-till farming!

Plowing by inverting the soil leaves it EXPOSED! The carbon dioxide ESCAPES!

In fact, 80 billion tons of carbon have already escaped.

Oh, the name for this kind of farming is REGENERATIVE. (Sustainable is really a wimpy word.)

We need to regenerate the soil, stop releasing carbon.

I'll tell you more next time I see you.

Some people think that regenerative farming could solve the global warming crisis. That's because new practices put a premium on building good soil and sequestering carbon. In

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Regeneration

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fact, no other mechanism known to humankind is as effective in addressing global warming as capturing carbon dioxide from the air through photosynthesis. Carbon produces plants and food. “Regenerative agriculture” practices feed the soil, increasing organic matter, fertility, texture, water retention, and the existence of trillions of micro-organisms that convey health and protection to the roots and plant itself.

Why should Friends be concerned with this?

The best way to support farmers who are using these techniques is to buy their produce, dairy products and meat. You can find farmers markets and CSAs near you by entering your zip code at www.localharvest.org.

Doing so would allow you to participate in what many hope will be a major revolution in farming. It’s a revolution that reduces global warming and makes people healthier.

Yes, the food can be more expensive, but look at the benefits: you’re making a gift to the soil and the atmosphere. You’re showing your love for Earth. You’re reducing global warming. You’re showing your gratitude to your own body.

Regenerative farming uses organic practices and more:

- **No Tillage.** In traditional farming, plowing exposes the soil and inverts it. Those beneficial organisms within the soil decay quickly and carbon is released. Eighty billion tons of carbon has been released into the atmosphere in traditional farming. Bringing the carbon back into the soil is a gift to the atmosphere, and it increases the life of the soil and reduces global warming.

- **Cover crops** give the soil a rest and add nutrients and positive qualities to the soil. Cover crops also crowd out weeds.

Ask your farmer if he or she uses these practices.



Resources on Regeneration

From the **REGENERATION ORGANIZATION**

The project: The Regeneration Organization’s approach to climate change weaves justice, climate, biodiversity, equity, and human dignity into a seamless tapestry of action, policy, and transformation. In 2021, they launched a book, a streaming video series, curriculum, podcasts, teaching videos, and climate action software.

The book: *Regeneration: Ending the climate crisis in one generation*, by Paul Hawken. One section focuses on food, although one or more of the articles in every section (except Energy) also discusses food.

The review: *BeFriending Creation* quakerearthcare.org/book-review-of-paul-hawkens-regeneration-ending-the-climate-crisis-in-one-generation/

The website: regeneration.org

As with the solutions in the Drawdown framework, a high percentage of the solutions in the Regeneration framework (called “Nexus”) relate to food and how it is grown, processed and prepared. See: regeneration.org/nexus/regenerative-agriculture

The movies:

2040: Join the Regeneration — theregenerators.org/2040/
Kiss the Ground — kissthegroundmovie.com

Key quotes:

“Since 1850, industrial agriculture has created a legacy of water pollution, animal abuse, degraded land, and wildlife habitat

destruction. It has been responsible for over a third of all carbon dioxide emissions generated by humans. We must switch to regenerative agriculture, which is modeled on nature, sequesters carbon, heals land, and honors life.

“Regenerative agriculture focuses on restoring and maintaining biologically healthy soil. It takes its cues from nature, which has a long record of successfully growing things. By recarbonizing soils via photosynthesis and biology, regenerative agriculture produces healthy food, protects watersheds, strengthens ecological and cultural diversity, and expands economic resilience. It is a low-cost, “shovel-ready” solution to climate change. It can restore degraded land. It can feed the world. Regenerative agriculture has ancient origins and is the foundation of Indigenous and traditional food systems worldwide.

“Regeneration is an inclusive and effective strategy compared to combating, fighting, or mitigating climate change. Regeneration creates, builds, and heals....It includes how we live and what we do—everywhere. We have a common interest and that interest can only be served when we come together.

“Regeneration means putting life at the center of every action and decision.”



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From **PROJECT DRAWDOWN:**

The project: Founded in 2014, Project Drawdown's mission is to help the world reach "drawdown"—the point in the future when levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere stop climbing and start to steadily decline, thereby stopping catastrophic climate change—as quickly, safely, and equitably as possible. Stopping global warming is possible, with solutions that exist today. In order to do this, we must work together as quickly, safely, and equitably as possible.

The book: *Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming*, edited by Paul Hawken. Published in 2017, the book showcases climate solutions researched by Project Drawdown.

The website: www.drawdown.org provides a supplemental list of references used in development of the book.

The update: Project Drawdown's latest analysis and insights, The Drawdown Review (2020), is free to download from the website. Key updates include sorting solutions into three sectors:

- A. Reduce Sources: Bringing emissions to zero;
- B. Support Sinks: Uplifting nature's carbon cycle and
- C. Improve Society: Fostering equality for all.

Twenty of the 93 current solutions relate to "Food, Agriculture & Land Use," and the Land Sinks section of Support Sinks discuss solutions that relate to regenerative farming.

Key quote:

"Drawdown is a critical turning point for life on Earth, and we must strive to reach it quickly, safely, and equitably. The Drawdown Review and this

website present an overview of climate solutions in hand—now, today—to reach Drawdown and begin to come back into balance with the planet's living systems. These solutions are tools of possibility in the face of a seemingly impossible challenge. They must not remain the domain of specialists or select groups."

From **Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW):**

The newsletter: Quaker Earthcare Witness produces a quarterly newsletter called *BeFriending Creation*. Most issues include material on food and/or regenerative agriculture. You can have a print version mailed to you or receive it via email.

The multimedia: QEW also offers videos, over 30 pamphlets, and a couple of Earthcare curricula, all available at their website, quakerearthcare.org.

The workshops: QEW offers a wide range of workshops. Here are a few most relevant to Mindful Eating:

Equality or Equity? What is Our Testimony?: Beverly Ward examines Friends' equality testimony, the concepts of equity and justice, and the relationship of these to Earthcare.

Permaculture is Not Just Agriculture: Beverly Ward introduces permaculture design and domains and ways to bring these practices into Earthcare.

Project Drawdown, Introduction and more: Beverly Ward presents information on actions that "drawdown" carbon emissions and ways to promote drawdown choices as individuals and communities.

Regenerative Agriculture: Sustainable Is not Enough: Carol Barta discusses what it will take to produce nutrient dense food on healthy soil. "Over the course of the

last four decades a growing number of farmers and ranchers have risked, stumbled and learned how to build healthy soil and healthy profits for their farms by going against the conventional wisdom. Along the way they discovered that healthy soil is the basis for a healthy ecosystem and potentially a healthy planet. We'll explore the component parts of regenerative agriculture and discuss why whole-system-thinking is the best way to feed the world."

Restoring Life and Hope: Jim Kessler shares "powerful and inspiring stories of how creating native plant habitat has positively impacted the mental, physical, and spiritual health of our Quaker family. The presentation also describes how songbird, pollinator, and wildlife populations have dramatically increased in response to the introduction of native plants."

Selected Readings from QEW's BeFriending Creation

Ruah Swennerfelt's book review of *Regeneration* by Paul Hawken: "Regeneration offers an approach to climate change that weaves equity, justice, climate, and biodiversity, instead of focusing only on energy issues. The book was written with six basic frameworks for action, and the first is equity. Paul writes, "This comes first because it encompasses everything. All that needs to be done must be infused by equity." (quakerearthcare.org/book-review-of-paul-hawkens-regeneration-ending-the-climate-crisis-in-one-generation/)

Tom Small's recent article **Regeneration: A Matter of Life and Breath** gives an overview of healthy soil, the disruptions caused by industrial agriculture, and brings it back to how we might all "Participate,

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Regeneration

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as we are able, in the patterns, the relationships that involve the passing of the seasons, the rising and setting of the sun, and the breathing of forests.” (quakerearthcare.org/regeneration-a-matter-of-life-and-breath/)

In Permaculture: The Art of Designing Beneficial Relationships, Carol Barta provides a brief introduction to Earth care, people care, and fair share, which lie at the heart of the ethics which permaculture has taught and practiced around the world for the past 45 years. (quakerearthcare.org/permaculture-the-art-of-designing-beneficial-relationships/)

NYYM's Earthcare Fund Supports Food-related Projects

NYYM's Earthcare Fund gives grants and donations that provide spiritual and material support to those engaged in the compelling task of transforming our relationship with Earth, including addressing the climate crisis. The Fund is supported by NYYM's Sharing Fund. Grants are from \$50 to \$500. For information on applying see: nyym.org/content/nyym-financial-resources-individuals-and-meetings#earthcare

During 2022, in addition to the Central Nyack Pollinator Pathway, the Earthcare Fund supported the following food-related projects:

- **Akwesasne Task Force for the Environment:** support for the Mohawk Nation's project promoting food sovereignty and traditional plant-based medicines.
- **Bard Prison Initiative's Garden Programs:** prisoners growing



Friends from Friends Peace Teams board a boat headed to Maomawan Island, Bohol, Philippines.

some of their own food while learning job and business skills.

- **Friends Peace Teams Asia/Pacific:** a donation to help a Philippine village replace fishing boats destroyed by Typhoon Odette.
- **Soul Fire Farm:** At the request of Hamilton Meeting, we donated \$500 to Soul Fire Farm's CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program for low income families.
- **Wounded Knee/Porcupine Garden:** We worked with Farmington Scipio Regional Meeting to help a Lakota band in South Dakota start a garden.



Poem

Sheree Cammer
Albany Meeting

Regeneration:

We are aligned with all life.

We are the rain

we are the trees

we have become native
to the land that loves us.

My business

My business is bliss.

My business

My business is bliss:

Regeneration!

Life!!!

Save the young from self
annihilation.



Mindful Eating  13

Personal Stories

Of Wild Winds Buffalo Preserve and Ancient Sea Shells

Sheree Cammer
Albany Meeting

On a recent train trip through the midwest, my cousin and his wife introduced me to the Wild Winds Buffalo Preserve in Fremont, Indiana. Bill Three Paws Elias drove our tour in a pickup truck. I had the best seat: front seat passenger. The herd was placidly grazing, their noses buried in the sweet red clover blossoms. They ambled along together from time to time in the ample fenced paddock, one of seven. They are regenerating habitat as they have done for millennia, grazing the prairie grasses without overgrazing, while fertilizing them with manure. People eat meat from the culls, and help care for the herd.

“They tell us when they want to move,” Bill drawled. “The whole herd will come up to the gate and let me know they’re ready for fresh pasture.”

Some buffalo wandered freely over to the truck. One buffalo approached within inches of my face. Our eyes met, frankly, kin greeting kin. The

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Buffalo from car window. Photo by Sheree Cammer.

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afterimage remains. Those eyes, so big and depthless, kind, and wise transformed me: I am to speak for life. I am to read that gaze, and intuit and convey *An Urgent Call to People Everywhere: Regeneration*.

Bill drove us to what he called a special place, where buffalo cow skulls were carefully arranged. Native people had gathered there. Prayer flags fluttered, honoring the seven directions: east, south, west, north, up (sky), down (earth) and “The seventh color, purple,” says Bill, “is for the most important direction: the center.”

Bill paints us a picture: Sometimes a cow and her calf will come and touch their noses to a skull; it’s like they’re visiting a gravesite.

Last week I met a young man. He disappeared and returned in a few hours with a gift: fossilized sea creatures. The Ancient Ones. Our Ancestors.

In the days after, I found my thumb fit perfectly into the concave of one of the bivalve shells. Lately I’ve discovered the shell imprint of the rock fits my lips perfectly. Songs began to come, evolving from “I am Calling You” to “Life is Calling Us.”

Is this message from the Ancient Ones, Our Ancestors:

What is lasting and true and good?

What is All-Powerful, unfolding, evolving, growing?

The Life Force/The All-Good, the ocean of light completely covering the ocean of darkness.

Regeneration of life and our spirits: Antidote to self-annihilation by heroin, suicide, and beautiful lives lost.

A mainstream cultural turnaround to embrace our common unity, regen-

erating life, to being potent, purposeful, and powerful.

I touch the fossil imprint; Buffalo touch the skulls of their ancestors.

In the name of all that is holy, may I/we live in service to all life.

Song

Oh oohh uh oh!

I forgot to take my anti-love potion today.

I’m in love with everything. Again.

The day held out his arms.

We embraced.

“I love you,” said Day.

What did I say?

“I love you too.”

Energy pouring through all life.

We are attuned.



Raising Sheep, Regenerating the Land

Rebekah Rice
Saratoga Meeting

When my parents purchased our family farm in upstate New York, no one had actively farmed for many years. This land, with a history of having been purchased from Mohawks in 1673, had in the years since been clear cut, overgrazed, plowed, and eventually mostly allowed to grow back to forest. This was typical for land settled by colonizers in this area.

Former fields that had been cut for hay over the previous 80 years were worn down to heavy clay with less than half a percent of organic matter. My father set about making compost and raising a large organic vegeta-

ble garden, which was lots of work because the soil was in such poor condition. The fields stopped producing hay, and got weedy. We used fossil fuels to cut them once a year, so they would stay open, which we did not feel good about.

Seven years ago, on a whim, I got five sheep. I had learned in my Holistic Management* course about rotational grazing and how the process of animals biting the grass and forbs would stimulate growth and sequester carbon. This system borrows from the way in which wild groups of buffalo, antelope, and other ruminants arrive in an area, eat deeply, and leave again — which turns out to radically improve soil.

We got some electric fencing. We got some woven wire perimeter fencing. We built up our flock of sheep, bringing in awesome rams to improve the genetics. We learned to kill lambs of lesser quality, using traditional prayer and processes. Our flock increased. And YES! Our soil improved. We’re storing carbon. We are regenerating the land.

Our sheep do not ever receive grain, and thrive directly on our fields from April to November, and indirectly by eating hay from our land the remainder of the year. Their meat contains healthy omega-3, which is one good reason to eat grass-fed grass-finished meat in addition to their soil building gifts.

Friend Sheree Cammer eats lamb from our farm. She testifies we should “Eat food that is regeneratively raised. This includes avoiding animal products from animals who are not allowed to express their true nature, i.e. pasture raised, rotationally grazed, replenishing the fertility and fountain

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Personal Stories

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of biodiversity of the land.” I would add that it’s important to me that no animal should experience fear at the end of their life, which is why we harvest them on our farm, out of sight of the rest of the flock, calmly, quietly, reflectively, with gratitude.

*See: holisticmanagement.org/the-regenerative-solution/



Salmon Lifeway

Joel Isaak, Dena’ina

The Salmon come to us. This simple statement is deeply profound but today western science is just catching up to why this matters. Across Alaska our Indigenous people have lived with Salmon for thousands of years. Scientific fields describe Salmon as a keystone species. In the slow growing glaciated north plants have a limited growing cycle. Salmon provide the main nutritional value for the entire ecosystem of Alaska. Salmon bring the nutrients from the ocean up our rivers and streams and everything that eats salmon spreads these nutrients inland from the rivers. Without Salmon the north would look very different.

Salmon are spoken of as our relatives. Salmon are individuals and a collective. Our forests and rivers have grown together to create ideal Salmon habitat. Our people have situated our lifeways, our village locations, migration patterns, technologies, medicine, clothing, and ceremonies around Salmon’s return. Our people do not view ourselves as separate from Salmon. Recently geneticists have found genetic markers in our ancestral and contemporary DNA that show our people

have lived with Salmon as a mainstay of our diet for thousands of years.

The Salmon want to return, they come to us, they give themselves to those who take good care of them. We have a first fish ceremony and a blessing of the water every year as a sign of respect and to call our Salmon relatives home. It is important to return their bones to the water. As much of the Salmon is used as possible. Nothing is wasted. Keep the spruce trees, willows, and grasses growing along the river. Don’t take more than you need. Have good thoughts when putting up the Salmon. Don’t go out into the ocean to harvest a lot of Salmon, that’s their home. Don’t go up to the spawning grounds to harvest Salmon, that’s their nursery.

If we don’t take good care of Salmon they will not return to us and the lands will change as well. It is possible to take Salmon and exploit them. This was done when the canneries first arrived in Alaska. Colonizers saw the sheer abundance of these fish and literally tried to catch them all, every single one. This love for money is diametrically opposed to our spiritual connection with Salmon. There used to be hundreds of Salmon cultures around the world; now there are very few. This is what happens when Salmon are exploited. Elders say, “don’t sell our foods.” This is a warning to remember to treat the lands and waters with respect.

Salmon and the lands and waters



Yeva washing Salmon at the Kenaitze Tribal net and processing area in the summer of 2022. Photo by Rebekah Rice.

they navigate through are considered relatives. We don’t have a tradition of buying and selling human beings in our culture. Slavery is not something we have practiced nor is it something that we would impose on our Salmon relatives. If we don’t take good care of the Salmon they will choose not to return. We have seen this in the past, and we are seeing it today. However, we have also seen Salmon return when we welcome them back in a good way.

Editorial Note: Joel was a recipient of an Indian Affairs Committee stipend while a student at SUNY Alfred. Rebekah and her granddaughter Yeva visited Joel at his home in Alaska this past summer.



Food is Weird

Joshua Quirk

So it’s 2010, I’m 18 years old, and I’ve left home to live states away with my internet girlfriend. As you know, these

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types of stories don't often end so well.

Fast forward two years. I'm drowning in a toxic relationship with no room to breathe. I experienced my needs being crushed by the interminable pressure of a partner who just wasn't right for me. The stress led to me giving up my own morals, beliefs, loves, and truly my identity to the situation. I was so deep in it that I couldn't see the light any more.

My health rapidly plummeted. The diet that we shared didn't help that; multiple trips to fast food establishments a week, and we felt absolutely deprived if we didn't eat out at a sit-in restaurant at least once a week. I'd guzzle sugary coffees just to stay awake, and this magic potion that I once lauded so highly now caused me anxiety, and whole-body pain.

I spent years struggling through this. Every week I would find something new to blame my newfound painful existence on: It was brain lesions. It was cancer. It was zinc. It was gluten. It was milk. It was fibromyalgia. It was chocolate. It was my DNA. It was *H. pylori* infesting my gut. It was every single thing that spilled out of my web browser's search results and straight into my screaming amygdala.

Truthfully... it took a while to figure out what it really was. But it wasn't comparing my own condition to others that helped me as much as turning inwards.

It was a lack of spirit.

Eight years later, in 2018 I did something truly bizarre. Led by spirit, that fellow who I'd recently begun to listen to again, I began to eat an entirely meat diet. In that half-year, I

consumed more steak, salmon, bacon, and eggs than an average American may eat in half a decade. Nothing else but water.

It was an elimination diet. The purpose was to determine what was causing my illness. By listening to my body. I did find the answers, and I was slowly able to re-integrate other foods.

Bear in mind this whole time my soul was very, *very* consistently keeping me informed of the immense pain that I was inflicting with this diet. I'd write long posts to friends about my struggle with this cognitive dissonance. But it did work, and bizarrely it was what felt right for the time being.

I realized that if I wanted to avoid the obviously forthcoming multiple lives spent living as enslaved cows next to slaughterhouses that I would have to determine a way to heal, so that I could return to a more balanced diet. One that healed not only my body, but also my soul.

Starting by re-introducing broccoli, and then moving to other plants, I began to transition first to a balanced diet that worked for my body, and then, eventually, to a completely vegan diet.

As I healed my body, and as I healed my soul, I also healed my relationship with my partner. And as that rift healed, as the toxicity coagulated and then dissolved, we realized that it was all that was holding us together. Without our toxic habits, we had nothing to talk about. Nothing to do together. We were suddenly strangers.

It was in 2010 that I began this path to learn this lesson. In 2022 I am healed.

Spiritual Crisis in an Eating Disorder

Cai Quirk
Ithaca Meeting

When I was 13, I heard the word 'transgender' for the first time and it immediately resonated to my core, but I was too scared back then to live into this truth. When I was 14, I developed an eating disorder; my mind tried to starve this truth out of me. I didn't realize that my desire for a 'male athletic body type' was really more rooted in being genderqueer than it was in my size. When I was 15, I rediscovered that I was trans and I began to heal more quickly.

I never understood how I could possibly forget about being trans for a year, but recently I found an answer in the book *Singing the Soul Back Home*. This book described how people who resist deep spiritual calls can develop serious illnesses until they listen to the call and follow Spirit faithfully. Again, I immediately saw the connection to my own life. For years I have understood my gender fluidity and spirituality to be deeply intertwined. Only now, 12 years later, do I see the role of an eating disorder in the spiritual crisis of my mid-teens.

Back then, I saw a therapist and a nutritionist, but both tried to solve the symptoms rather than find a cause. They got me out of immediate crisis, but I couldn't fully heal. Neither was spiritual, and I wasn't open about my eating disorder in my Quaker meeting. I didn't have words for how dissonant the 'therapy' felt, how it forced me into other problematic eating habits, and how reaching a 'healthy weight' did not in any way

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mean that I had reached a healthy mental or spiritual state of being.

Nine years later I joined the NYYM Mentoring Program and connected with a mentor who is well versed in the 12-step program. I finally began to fully heal. I finally began to fully trust myself. I finally had the kind of support that helped me release the last insidious roots of the eating disorder.

At a recent extended family dinner, we were asked to share memories of similar dinners from years past. I was glad that the circle never got around to me, because the memories that stood out most were of the years I would do hundreds of push-ups, crunches, and jumping jacks in the basement on either side of dinner, and eat as little as I could get away with. This year, I had no idea how many calories were on my plate... not only did I not even try to count, but I don't have the nutritional data of hundreds of foods memorized anymore. I could truly enjoy a meal with my family.

In the past few years, I have found several food intolerances. Physical pain develops throughout my body if I eat gluten, dairy, caffeine, or large amounts of sugar. The spiritual mindfulness around eating that grew with the 12-step program helped me find the causes of low-level chronic pains that I didn't know were there until they were gone. I never knew my body could feel this good. I don't remember what it was like to eat normally — that was half my lifetime ago — but I'm building those memories now.

I have wondered if this is a different manifestation of the eating disorder, and yet I can feel deep within me

how much more connected to Spirit I am than I was all those years ago. I can feel how much more I listen to my body now. Sometimes that listening even includes potato chips, and I can eat them guilt-free. And still, in writing this article, I wonder... is my lactose intolerance a symptom that I am resisting a new spiritual call?

If you are in crisis, the National Eating Disorder Hotline is +1 (800) 931-2237.



More Veggies/ Less Meat

Janet Soderberg
Fifteenth Street Meeting

This plan is purposely easy because I don't usually spend more than 45 minutes cooking. It's NOT for hearty eaters. My husband Tom and I eat moderately. For one person, get half of a chicken if possible or get a whole one and freeze the other half. Also, we eat organic whenever possible because it's better for the earth (and us!). Usually I get these vegetables from the Union Square Farmers Market: broccoli, green beans, carrots, bok choy, kale, etc. During the winter I've found organic broccoli florets and more at Trader Joe's and many more choices at Whole Foods.

How to make a cooked chicken from Whole Foods stretch for five meals for two people without scrimping

My partner Tom brings home the cooked organic chicken and I separate the parts: legs and thigh, breasts and wings, and I take all the excess meat off the bones. Into a small glass covered dish I put one leg and thigh for Tom, one thigh for me.

I also take all the meat off the wings, extra leg, and remaining bones while the chicken is still warm or room temperature and easy to do. I put all the other parts and meat into a storage container (glass because food keeps longer).

The vegetables: cutting up vegetables for me is therapeutic. I love experiencing their textures and colors, stuff of the earth(!), as I cut them to the right size for steaming.

I take the covered dish of chicken out of the refrigerator two hours early. To heat it up, I often bake a yam so the top of the toaster oven gets really hot and heats up the chicken. We also have a big helping of a steamed fresh swiss chard sprinkled with Balsamic vinegar and salt. Even during the winter, we can get beautiful fresh chard and fine salad greens from a farmer who grows it in a tent at Eckerton Hill Farms.

The second day we have curried chicken using one third of a 12 oz jar of curry sauce. I take all the excess meat and maybe a little bit of one breast and put it into a small covered pan with the curry sauce. I also make basmati rice sprinkled with cardamom seeds and prepare and steam a big portion of organic fresh broccoli florets from Trader Joe's. A little lemon juice and salt make the broccoli tastier.

The next night might be another curry because we love Indian food. We also steam the last of the swiss chard.

The fourth night we might have chicken (part of a breast) heated up in a small dish. I also make short-grain brown rice. On top of the chicken and rice, we put Thai peanut sauce from Whole Foods heated up in a small pan. We also steam more of the

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broccoli florets.

The fifth night we might have curried chicken if there is enough chicken left. We also have steamed broccoli rabe. If we have time to saute it, it's great with fresh garlic.

Of course we don't necessarily have chicken five days in a row. We might make a vegetable stir fry using Hempeh, which is tempeh made with peanuts and hemp seeds. Hempeh is a little expensive, but when you consider it's a tasty vegetarian source of protein, it seems worth it.

Happy eating!

Background: Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh has said that making the transition to a plant-based diet may be the most effective way an individual can stop climate change. Eating is profoundly personal and cultural. While reducing or eliminating meat may be difficult for many people, this is a big way to make a difference.

According to the latest analysis by Project Drawdown, eating a plant-rich diet is the third most effective way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. As Drawdown notes, a meat "diet comes with a steep climate price tag: one-fifth of global emissions. If cattle were their own nation, they would be the world's third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases."

"Plant-rich diets...tend to be healthier, leading to lower rates of chronic disease," notes Drawdown. "\$1 trillion in annual health-care costs and lost productivity could be saved." If price-distorting government subsidies, such as those benefiting the U.S. livestock industry, were eliminated, the true cost of meat would then be reflected in its price.



Becoming Flexitarian: When Being Vegan or Vegetarian isn't an Option

Margaret McCasland
Ithaca Meeting

I grew up knowing where most of my food came from. Both sets of grandparents grew, gathered, fished or hunted much of their food: my father's family in the Adirondacks, my mother's family on the shores of the Atlantic. I was born in a fishing village, and we moved to a small farming hamlet when I was nine. Our milk and eggs came from neighbors' farms, and we raised our own goats, ducks and geese. My father had an apiary adjacent to a neighbor's produce farm, and we harvested as many vegetables as we could eat in exchange for the bees' pollinating services.

During neighborhood canning bees, we put up a year's worth of fruit and vegetables. In the late 50s, the women were thrilled when Sears started selling chest freezers, because it was easier to freeze most fruits and veggies than it was to use a pressure canner. My father ordered an extra large freezer so there would be room for the venison he brought back from his annual Adirondack hunting trip.

As a child, I ate what was put in front of me, with one notable exception. Since I spent much of my time after school and summers playing with baby goats, I would not eat their meat when they were slaughtered in the fall. So my father promised (lied) that he would find homes for all the kids. One of the kids did find a home at a friend's house, so I believed him—

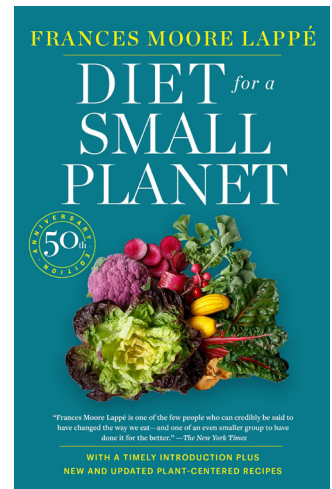
until the year I killed a deer with my VW bus.

A neighbor and I butchered the deer. Once the meat was packaged and we sat down to eat some pan-fried liver, my neighbor could tell I was in shock and recommended a shot of whiskey. As soon as I began to drink it, I started shaking. Deer had just joined the goats on my "do not eat list."

My husband was happy to eat venison, and I also brought venison to every pot-luck that winter.

My half of the deer was soon gone, and I realized that the single deer my father killed every November could not have fed seven people for over six months. So I called one of my brothers and asked whether some of the "venison" we ate was actually goat meat. He said of course it was, but they had to pretend it was venison so I would eat it. In retrospect, I was grateful they had complied, instead of teasing me about eating "Alice" or "Whitey."

I killed the deer in the early 1970s, while I was part of the "back to the land" movement in central NYS (hence all the potlucks). Vegetarianism was a new idea to most of us, but we were heavily influenced by two books: Frances Moore Lappé's *Diet for a Small Planet*, which taught us how to get complete proteins from



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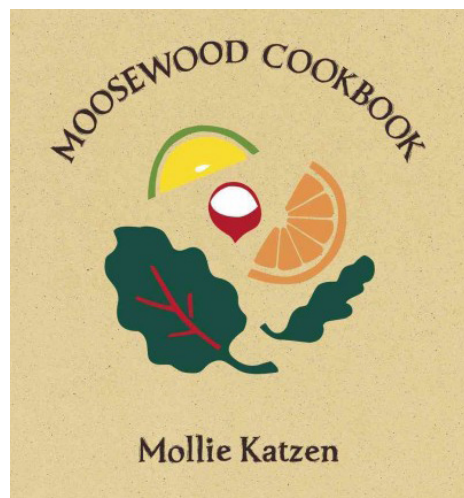
Personal Stories

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vegetarian diets, and the *Moosewood Cookbook*, based on recipes from a cooperatively-owned restaurant here in Ithaca. While Moosewood was famous for their vegetarian recipes, the restaurant served chicken and fish Friday and Saturday evenings. When it turned out that my children had trouble digesting milk, eggs, and some vegetable protein, I took a leaf from Moosewood's book, and introduced them to fish and poultry.

This fall I discovered a name for the way I have been eating for decades: "flexitarian," a combination of the words "flexible" and "vegetarian." When doctors diagnosed my chronic joint pain as caused by multiple food intolerances a few years ago, my diet became extremely restricted. The flexitarian philosophy helps me enjoy the options I do have (occasional small portions of many foods). It also helps me understand and respect why some people choose to be vegan or vegetarian and others choose to eat responsibly-raised meat from mammals.

RELATED RESOURCE: "What Is a Flexitarian?" by Linnea Covington: www.thespruceeats.com/what-is-a-flexitarian-5095820



Additional Resources

We want to emphasize that none of the resources we include in the booklet are meant to be taken as a list of "thou shalts" or "thou shalt nots." We are including resources as suggestions for you to use when and/or if they are appropriate for you and your personal circumstances, including your cultural traditions, your ethical decisions regarding animals as food, your medical and emotional needs, your finances, any logistical limitations, etc.

Food systems affect our entire planet, but what you eat is very personal.

The Environmental Working Group (the other "EWG")

NYYM's Earthcare Working Group (EWG) often gets confused with two other organizations. One is Quaker Earthcare Witness, which brings Friends from around North America together to work on Earthcare concerns and joys. NYYM has a long-standing relationship with QEW.

The other group shares our acronym, EWG, but their "E" stands for "Environmental." The **Environmental Working Group** advocates for public policies that promote public health and provide information to consumers so they can make informed choices. They have created a series of databases and guides on food, water, cosmetics, endocrine disruptors, etc, all downloadable from their website, www.ewg.org.

Their **Shopper's Guide to Pesticides in Produce** is especially useful when deciding which fruits and vegetables to buy. It includes the **Dirty Dozen**, which lists the non-organic fresh fruits and vegetables with the most pesticide contamination: www.ewg.org/foodnews/dirty-dozen.php Whenever possible

you may want to buy strawberries, spinach, kale, apples, grapes, etc, that are organic or at least produced by farmers who use low spray techniques.

When organic options are unavailable or unaffordable, the EWG advises shoppers to buy produce from its **Clean Fifteen**: www.ewg.org/foodnews/clean-fifteen.php. Happily, this group includes favorites like avocados, sweet corn, onions, frozen sweet peas, kiwi, mushrooms, sweet potatoes, watermelons, etc.

Three other guides address concerns we have discussed in this issue of *Spark*:

1. The health benefits of a whole foods, plant-forward diet: www.ewg.org/research/health-benefits-whole-foods-plant-forward-diet
A plant-forward diet is rich in plant foods but can also include eggs, dairy foods, and occasionally lean meat, poultry and seafood.
2. EWG's quick tips for reducing your Diet's Climate Footprint: www.ewg.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/EWG_TipSheet_Meat-Climate_C02.pdf

Eating less meat, especially beef, can significantly reduce how much your choices contribute to the climate crisis. If the U.S. meat and dairy industry were its own country, it would be the world's 12th largest greenhouse gas emitter.

3. Factory farming produces more than the food on your table:

www.ewg.org/areas-focus/farming-agriculture/factory-farms

Lax regulations have allowed an explosion of factory farms, often located in areas with predominantly Black, Latino and Native American populations and low-income communities.

Additional Resources

“How to Grow Basil and Kickstart Your Own Kitchen Herb Garden” by Melissa Epifano, *Apartment Therapy*

www.apartmenttherapy.com/how-to-grow-basil-259602

EXCERPT: Windowsills are basically made for DIY herb gardens, and if you haven’t created your own yet, this is your sign. (see www.apartmenttherapy.com/growing-herbs-indoors-33700912) The list of plants you can include in your mini indoor garden is lengthy. You can cultivate mint for things like teas and mojitos, grow chives for added flavor, and harvest your own cilantro for salsas and pickling. (www.apartmenttherapy.com/the-dos-donts-of-growing-mint-147458) Another one of the most versatile herbs is basil, and if its number of uses aren’t reason enough, its ease of growing will convince you to add it to your roster of herbs.

“Corn Tastes Better on the Honor System” by Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Emergence Magazine*

Website with audio option:

emergencemagazine.org/feature/corn-tastes-better/

EXCERPT: Mother Corn claims us all as corn-children under the husk; her teachings of reciprocity are for all. I’m not saying that everyone should go back to Three Sisters agriculture or sing to their seeds; although I admit that is a world I want to live in. But we do need to restore honor to the way that food is grown. Agribusiness is quick to point out that we cannot feed a world of nearly eight billion people with gardens alone. This is true but omits the reality that most of the corn we grow is not going to hungry people: it is feeding cars. There is another kind of hunger in our affluent society, a

hunger for justice and meaning and community, a hunger to remember what industrial agriculture has asked us to forget, but the seed remembers. Good farming should feed that hunger, too.

The Monterey Bay Aquarium

Their **Seafood Watch** program produced a menu of printable guides to choosing seafood:

www.seafoodwatch.org/recommendations/download-consumer-guides

As their website says, “From small family-run shrimp farms in Vietnam to large tuna fishing fleets off the Atlantic coast, every seafood product has a story to tell. Knowing the details of how and where your seafood is harvested is key to protecting our ocean and ensuring a long-term supply of seafood.”

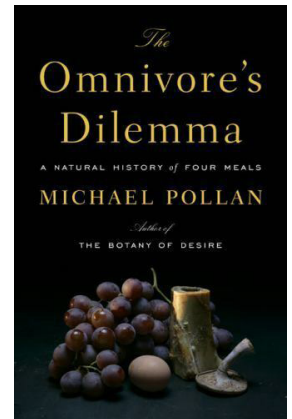
See www.seafoodwatch.org.

Food Rules: An Eater’s Manual by Michael Pollan

SUMMARY: Pollan offers 64 rules on eating in three sections, the titles of which are themselves the three most basic rules: 1) Eat food, 2) Mostly plants, 3) Not too much. He also defines what does (apples) and does not (Twinkies) count as food.

The Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals by Michael Pollan

SUMMARY: As omnivores, we humans evolved with the ability to eat a wide variety of foods. But what should we have for dinner? How we answer this question today, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, may well determine our very survival as a species. Should we eat a fast-food hamburger? Something organic? Or perhaps something we hunt, gather, or grow ourselves? The omnivore’s dilemma



has returned with a vengeance, as the cornucopia of the modern American supermarket and fast-food outlet confronts us with a bewildering and treacherous food landscape. What’s at stake in our eating choices is not only our own and our children’s health, but the health of the environment that sustains life on Earth.



SPARK

New York Yearly Meeting
The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Most articles originally appeared in the January 2023 issue of *Spark*, the NYYM newsletter. This booklet includes both expanded, revised and/or reformatted versions of those articles, plus some new articles, resources and graphics. For the PDF of this booklet or the original issue of *Spark* visit nnyym.org/Mindful-Eating. For more information, contact Sarah Way, *Spark* editor, at communications@nnyym.org.

New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) is a gathering of Quaker meetings and worship groups in New York state, northern and central New Jersey, and southwestern Connecticut. Visit www.nnyym.org. NYYM Office: 15 Rutherford Place, New York, NY 10003 • 212-673-5750