

Anarchy, food and sustainability

Theme Introduction

john johnson

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Grow Food or Die! exclaims the headline from *Live Wild or Die!* (an eco-anarchist “breakaway” zine circulating in the Earth First! milieu in the ‘90s). The message rings true today. How will food be dealt with before, during, and after a potential catastrophe or our anarchist revolution? With farmers making up less than two percent of the US’s population and farmland giving way to generic subdivisions, we must wonder what and how we are going to eat after a crisis or in our future Utopia.

Increasing numbers of american anarchists are skilled dumpster divers who help keep the many Food Not Bombs chapters well supplied. DIY movements are finally looking at food. Urban gardens and rural permaculture projects are developing with some integrating into the anarchist movement. But is that enough? Many anarchist organizers are familiar with the question, “Just what’s the food plan in the anarchist vision?” It’s a question that we need to address if we’re to be taken seriously in our call for the dissolution of state, capital, technology, etc. To begin, we need coalitions with farmers, gardeners, wild crafters, scavengers and foragers. We need to learn how to grow, gather, cultivate, and prepare good, healthy food as an alternative to the garbage that the current society pushes on us.

And, in and amongst our critiques of, and attacks on capital, state, technology, etc. we need Vision! Not a top down vision of what should be, but a multiplicity of ideas of what could be—possibilities, inspirations that are practical, utopian, and fun.

Speaking of Visions, here are some of mine...Vast rural and suburban areas reclaimed as Wild Forests, Wetlands, Prairies and Deserts. Chemical Death Agriculture giving way to natural, lively permaculture...Suburban manicured lawns transformed into patches of rioting green growth—beans, dandelions, native grasses, astors, pokeweed, squash, raspberries, spinach, plantain, broccoli, kale, corn, and more...Cities with entire blocks dedicated to gardens, blueberry patches and solar panels on roofs, grapevines climbing skyscrapers...A population that is more interested in sharing seeds and swapping gardening tips than discussing NASCAR or what the Simpsons did on TV...Amateur brewers exchanging recipes and beer in the streets...Feral chickens following herds of buffalo through former suburbs...Inspired free people producing food locally, in season, for local areas...Fancy, Fine Dining free and available to all!...Egalitarian communities where food gathering and cultivation are viewed as joyful fun instead of drudgery... People in small towns, on rural farms, and in city neighborhoods who love their homes and create bountiful paradises, overflowing with wild nature, gardens, greenhouses and abundant food...Evening entertainment in neighborhood theatres and around campfires that ridicules the perilous excess of McWorld while recounting the joys of wandering in forests and getting dirty hands in the healthy soil of community gardens...Wild, liberated people that deeply appreciate wildflowers and plants for being the life givers they are...A small subculture of carnivores eating only meat and naturally dropped fruit in protest of the enslavement of plants...Seasonal celebrations of permaculture with storytelling relaying basic eco-design principles in mythic, epic, and exciting ways...Trees everywhere...Violets, beanstalks, pumpkin patches, and cherry tomatoes sprouting out of humanure piles!...The wild forest returning, taking over abandoned row crop fields and providing a bounty of nuts, greens and game...Cooperation and solidarity of sharing food, gathered, cultivated, scavenged and hunted!...And the wondrous mutual aid of working with plants and critters to create a bountiful, biodiverse paradise for all living things.

All ecosystems want to grow, produce, multiply! If we become them and work with them, instead of against them, we can have all the food we need and then some. No more of this sick myth of scarcity and hunger! Rip up the pavement, plant some seeds, make room for wild nature to do her fecund, rowdy thing and watch the green life thrive!

For you hard core organizers, advocates, activists, and proselytizers out there—food and the cooperative production of it will win us friends and allies. Feed and free their stomachs and their hearts—minds and asses will follow!

We have lots of good examples here and now, but we need more! In Maine, the Victory Gardens Project is working to provide healthy food for rural and urban communities that have been oppressed, imprisoned and exploited by the system. (Victory Gardens Project, RFD 1, Box 6025, Athens, ME 04912). In New York City, the More Gardens! coalition is using Earth First! style direct action to defend and spread urban gardens for everyone in the city. In Tennessee, folks at Moonshadow are hosting successful skillshare gatherings to help spread knowledge about food. Come on over to Tennessee this summer to learn, teach and Share ideas on food cultivation, preparation, preservation, politics and ideas. The Food for Life gathering will be held during the first two weekends of June and everyone is invited to participate. Food for Life, described as one of the most comprehensive food programs available, offers workshops and skillshares on seed saving, garden design, fermenting, macrobiotics, veganism, compassionate omnivorism, genetic engineering, farm labor, wildcrafting and more. Contact Moonshadow at Route One Box 304 Whitwell, TN 37397, call 423-949-5922, email mediarights@bledsoe.net or see www.svionline.org for more info.

And here, in the pages of the *Fifth Estate*, is a glimpse of the broad and diverse thoughts on food, sustainability, and the future. Witch Hazel offers a broad critique of our current dismal food system and raises some important questions that we will have to cope with in order to feed ourselves. Peter Lamborn Wilson recounts a history of farmers' resistance with "Grange Appeal". James Bell takes a hard look at the ravages of genetic tinkering and offers some ideas for action. Check out Crimethinc's scathing critique of the abuse of alcohol in the anarchist movement and culture in general. David Watson has some "Ecological Fancies" for us to ponder as we look for insight, humor, and new meaning during this unparalleled ecological crisis. And William Manson gives us some inspiration with a neat little essay on "Biophilia".

Enjoy, Grow Food and Live Free!

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