

Mindful Meat Eater, FINAL 4/24/23

If we saw how the plants and animals we eat are raised and grown, how they are killed and packaged, shipped and cooked, we would stop dead in our tracks. Each and every one of us would change the way we eat, and the modern global food system that relies on Mindlessness Consumption would dissolve in an instant.

“The opposite of love is not hate. The opposite of love is indifference... The opposite of life is not death. The opposite of life is indifference.”

- Elie Wiesel, Holocaust Survivor, Nobel Peace Prize recipient, referred to as “the messenger of mankind”, wrote this in reference to the horrors he experienced in concentration camps during World War II. There is much to learn from his reflections on the extremes of human experience.

You are what you eat. **To be indifferent to what you eat is to be indifferent to who you are.**

Most of us go through our day to days lives with little to no thought about our consumption, yet, every once in a while, in rare moments of clarity, we feel that something isn't quite right. Most people who are reading this and most of the people we interact with on a day to day basis are well-educated and take pride in being socially and environmentally conscious. Discomfort around our culture of mindless mass-consumption, particularly when it comes to food and food production, exists in the Zeitgeist: Most of us know that factory farms are bad for the animals, the earth, and the workers who raise, kill, butcher, package, ship, sell, and cook these products. Our Mindless Consumption is draining the world of its resources; Our Mindless Consumption is Voluntary Indifference. In the back of your mind, the misery that is chickens stuck in cages pumped up with chemicals to pump out as many eggs as possible, and the horror of a giant, hot, stinky and sticky warehouse jam packed with chickens who are engineered to get as fat as possible; The miles and miles of barren wasteland, deserted because of over-farming, deserted because the soil has been sapped of all the living organic matter inside of it with the harsh chemicals of weed killers and fertilizer; The workers who are living in near poverty who work in conditions you would never wish upon anyone, then all that gets shipped from who knows where to all over the country so that you can have a chicken sandwich or a double double with animal fries.

We are indifferent to the animals and vegetables and minerals, indifferent to the farmers and ranchers who raise and grow our food, indifferent to the meat packers who packed it, the delivery drivers who ship it to us, the cashiers who sell it to us, the cooks who prepare it for us, and all those who clean up our mess.

A little bit is a lot. To imagine overhauling the entire global food system is daunting and will lead to paralysis. But to imagine eating a meal containing ingredients I know the origin of? To buy carrots from a farmer at the farmer's market and talk to him or her and get to know them? More often than not, my food loop was closed: I knew where my food came from. More often than not, a majority of my calories came from animals I helped raise, and, in the case of sheep and chickens, killed and butchered. I had a unique connection to food and to the cycle of life from birth, through life, and to death.

Eating pasture-raised meats is better for your brain and your body because of increased nutrient density, with higher levels of vitamin E, Niacin, Protein, Collagen, and Amino Acids, and better for your soul because you are consuming mindfully, taking ownership over your life and helping make the world a better place. You will be stronger, smarter, happier, and healthier.

My Journey

I spent the Spring, Summer, and Fall of 2022 on a ranch on an island in the Pacific Northwest. I was the only full-time employee working with the two owners. We had 150 cows, 100+ egg laying chickens, hundreds of meat chickens, 30 sheep, dozens of pigs, and a few goats for milk. We butchered 150 meat chickens every 6 weeks, gathered eggs and milked the goats daily, and the butcher came out with a cold truck and killed and parted the pigs and cows and brought them back to the butcher shop every few months. I had a 15 cubic foot chest freezer outside my farm house. I had a small garden with loads of asparagus and potatoes which I grilled, pickled, smoked, baked. The forest was filled with Salmon Berries, like a cross between raspberry and a blueberry, and Miner's Lettuce, a tasty small leafy green. I'd get my fill every morning and evening during forest chores.

I was very intentional about where my food came from. I baked my own breads used my Catch-22 inspired sourdough starter named YoSourrian, using locally grown and milled organic wheat, baking 8 loaves in a few hours and freezing them. A few times a month I'd buy a loaf bread from Little Red Hen, a great bakery in Coupeville that uses all local organic ingredients.

Here's a picture of my freezer, filled with Chicken, Beef, Pork, sheep, loaves of bread and cookies I baked, soup and chicken broth, and Pig Fat I gave to the dogs as a treat or rendered into Lard or Pork Rinds. This made up at least 75% of all my food, if not more, and lasted me the 7 months on the farm. When I left, I brought 50+ lbs of meat with me and that fed me for 3 more months.



Was I perfect? nope. Did I cave every once in a while and buy a delicious bar of chocolate, get an ice cream cone or a pizza and beer whenever I went to neighboring towns, took vacations? of course.

I left the farm in November because the busy season was coming to a close, and I wanted to be closer to friends and family. This move came with a self-imposed existential challenge, as most life changes often do: I spent the last year deeply connected to nature, to animals, to myself. I raised the food I ate. I was in solitude for much of the day, deeply connected to a deep sense meaning. The prospect of living mindfully and being connected to my food while living in the hustle and bustle of San Francisco loomed over me: Would I be able to make it work?

As of March 2023, after two months of living in SF, I can confidently say Yes. I closed *most* of the loop and am connected to my food: I bought a quarter of a cow and some extra ground beef, 117lbs total, from Luann, the manager for Scott and Karen's Yolo Land and Cattle in Woodland, CA.

I normally eat one large meal per day. I use organic, local rice. My vegetables are from Manuel at farmer's market and eggs from either grocery store where I buy pasture raised cage free fed organic grains, or if I get lucky I'll buy eggs from a real farm or ranch.

My normal meal is a stir fry: rice with carrots, celery, eggs and beef or another source of protein. I eat this at least 3 days a week. I'll cook myself a steak, brisket, chuck roast, or ribs once a week or so. Throughout the day I snack on bread from local bakeries baked with organic wheat, and butter from the store and honey from farmer's market, and organic Fuji apples. I'll get a gallon of milk once or twice a month. Whole Foods normally carries Raw milk. Even better if you can get 100% grass fed raw milk. Butter is a tough one... there is a dairy farm that delivers raw milk and butter to San Francisco and am hoping to set that up this week.

I am not perfect, but I try to consumer mindfully more often than not. A little bit is a lot. Here are my Beef numbers from March 2023:

117 pounds of quality, local, grass-fed BEEF + \$200 Freezer = \$1,130 (92.22lb cow, 25 GB @ \$8)

Here's the amount of money the entire expenditure will cost you in the Bay Area: \$1,300
\$1,100 for 117 pounds of quality BEEF + \$200 for Chest Freezer

HERE is the basic formula:
“Choose what is right not what is expedient”

Step One: Find your local farms and ranches. How?

Eatwild.com, Weston Price website “local food/chapters” section , Localharvest.org.
Real food comes from real people. So get on the phone and talk to them. Most of the people you'll talk to love their life and would love to hear from you.

Step two: chest freezer. A beautiful addition to your home.

Step three: Pick up meat. Load up freezer.

Step four: Enjoy the mental and physical and spiritual benefits of being a mindful consumer.

Expanding on the Formula:

1. I called up Yolo Land and Cattle, a ranch out in Woodland, near Davis, CA. I talked to Luann in February, and they were just sending a batch of cows to the butcher. It'd be anywhere from 2 to 4 weeks until it was ready for pick up. A quarter of a cow costs \$9.75 per lb., and the cow would weigh around 90 lbs. The butcher butchers an entire cow and wraps it into ground beef, steaks, brisket, etc., and then you receive the whole cow, or an equal split into half or quarter. I got 1/4 of the entire butchered animal. It is cheaper if you get more: Half is cheaper than quarter, whole is cheaper than half.
2. I bought a chest freezer from Best Buy. Insignia 5cubic foot. I bought it on sale (\$30 off), and got it for \$200 out the door. It is 33.5" tall, 22" deep, and 25" wide. You could fit that in most cars. If you don't have a car, borrow someone else's and tell them you'll cook them some sweet sweet meats after. Or call me and we can use my truck.

- A great option for freezers is Craigslist or Facebook marketplace. Buying a used freezer isn't a bad idea and you can find some great deals. My chest freezer on the farm was over 20 years old and I picked it up for free. I couldn't find any in the few weeks I was waiting for my beef, but they pop up every so often.

Here is a pic of my chest freezer in my family room, underneath our ridiculously large speaker and beside our nonfunctioning microwave.

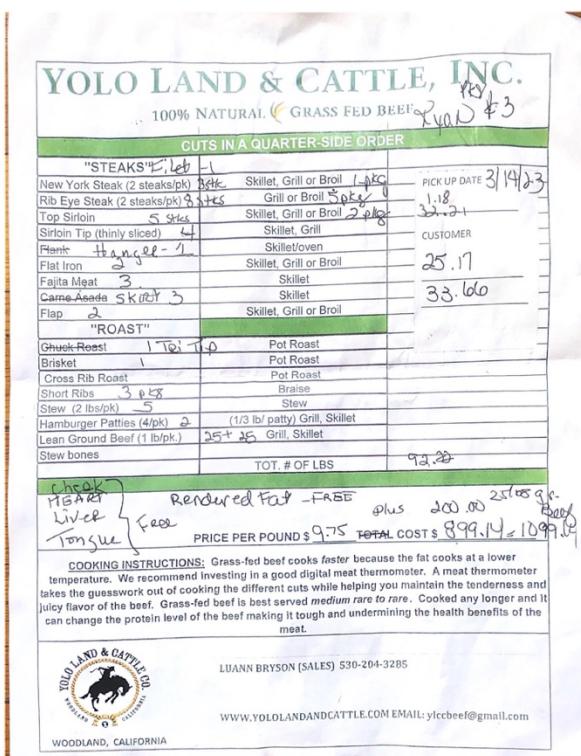


A nice decoration for any family room, garage, kitchen... Worthy of being in Architectural Digest. Aside from their aesthetic beauty, it's a great conversation starter, even more of a talking piece as art or furniture. It's a great excuse for me to do exactly what I'm doing here: share something I am proud of and passionate about.

If there's a will, there's a way. If you want to get creative, you can use it as a desk, a counter top, a surface to put plants on top of. Heck, maybe you're feeling artsy and you paint it.

*side note for chest freezer: When you move the fridge around and put it on its back or side during transport it messes with the internal fluid so best to leave it upright and unplugged for at least as long as you transported it, or, if possible, even longer. I left mine unplugged overnight, then plugged it in the day before I went out to get my beef.

3. A few days after getting my freezer, I drove out to Woodland to pick up my beef. The butcher cuts and packages the meats in the same way you'd find at the grocery store then they freeze it right away, meaning that you get the meat frozen and if you keep it frozen the quality will stay high. I also bought an extra 25lbs of Ground beef, as they had extra. The ground beef is \$8/lb. Below is the breakdown of my quarter cow



4. ☺

Farming and Philosophy and the Meaning of Life

The basics of our being, where do they come from? Where do you get your food?

Most people's fridge and freezer and pantry spans the globe and the seasons! We mindlessly demand quality and quantity, Reaping what overs have sown, Disconnected from Seasonality, growth patterns, weather, Disconnected from the natural rise and fall of life, of birth and death and rebirth We don't spend the time to think about all of this... Where do your bananas come from? Your milk? Your carrots? Who grows them? How do they grow them all year round?

Our current situation in regards to foods and to pretty much anything that makes us uncomfortable is to get it out of sight and not think about it. We are indifferent for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Here's a deep thought I don't have the space to dive into on this Doc:

If we shifted to Mindful Consumption and bought direct from farmers more often than not, and talked to them, showed appreciation, treated them with anything but indifference, and we were connect to our food and the people who made it for us, would the suicide rate for farmers and ranchers be three times the national average? How much of this burden did I, Ryan Walter Hendum, bear, when I was living in a way that is totally indifferent to the people who grow and raise the food I eat every day? How much responsibility do I take in this?

The question of responsibility is one I will dive into more in my future writing. Stay tuned for that.

No one who cares about the wellbeing of others and the health of our planet would eat most foods that they eat if they saw the entire process, especially meat. One single raindrop never feels responsible for the flood.

Many friends will tell me they want to eat chick fil a or in n out, and intentionally avoid thinking about the animal, how what they are eating was very recently a living and breathing animal. More often than not, an animal that was abused, drugged up, living in conditions that would make many people throw up. I can imagine the empires of in N Out, Chick fil a, Taco bell, McDonalds, KFC, Carls Jr, Panda Express, even your local bars and restaurants, collapsing, or being forced to change how they source their ingredients the moment the consumer sees the cows and pigs and chickens lined up for slaughter, can feel the soullessness of the animals and the workers there to do it, can smell the bowels being emptied, the blood pools on the floor, hear the skin being ripped off, bones being sawed, chickens being ground into a paste. . If you don't know about commercial farming of chickens, look up videos chicken factory farming.

This is gruesome, hard to confront. But our ignoring the difficulties of death and being indifferent to our food is what led to this situation.

The average burger from a fast food joint has parts from over 300 cows all blended together, a meat smoothie.

The average city only has a few days of food supply. Food is grown out of sight. Most foods at most restaurants is from sources that would make all of us vomit.

WE MUST ERADICATE THE MENTALITY OUT OF SIGHT OUT OF MIND

Ignorance is not bliss, because we are not ignorant. We are all smart enough to know that our consumption has gotten out of hand. There's no way all the food we consume is coming from a good spot. We all know it.

Miles and miles of this. Animals born, raised, killed, and consumed with total indifference.



This picture is one that needs to be acknowledged and confronted. We cannot simultaneously espouse virtues and morals and then live in contradiction to them. Most of us already know about the horrors of commercial farming and commercial food production. The discomfort around the source of our food floats in the Zeitgeist, yet we are too busy, too distracted, too fearful of what it would mean to confront it. We navigate the complexities of the modern world with the mantra “out of sight, out of mind”: Our slaughterhouses, feedlots, jails, old folks home, all of the suffering, death, and dying is pushed to the periphery: we don’t want to think about it.

Out of Sight out of Mind is to be intentionally indifferent. The opposite of love is not hate. The opposite of love is indifference. To be indifferent to our food is to be indifferent to ourselves, to our friends and family, to the world and all the people in it. We are indifferent to our own existence.

We are currently out of balance. Birth is all around us and we rejoice in it. Yet we fear death and ignore it; We put our old folks in nursing homes and hospitals, We raise animals in factories with chemicals from laboratories and kill them in slaughterhouses that make one’s skin crawl,

And the entire process is built on cheap labor, the immigrants that we in our liberal and socially advanced societies care for so much, are thrust into jobs we’d never do ourselves, where they pull the intestines out of cows for eight hours a day every day, with no insurance, no benefits, all so that we can eat hamburgers in our high castle of blissful ignorance.

You reap what you sow. Who is sowing? What are we reaping?

Thorough self-examination is difficult and it gets dark. But our saving grace lies in the darkness. What I say and Do matters. How I live my life matters.

Cicero said “I choose to be happy because it is good for my health”, and I say I choose to believe that What I say and Do and How I live my life matters, because this gives my life meaning and that is good for my health”... A bit of a mouthful, but you get the point.

A spiritual connection to animals is possible, a connection that improves the lives of the consumer and the consumed,

We need to replace the mantras of indifference with those of mindfulness. How about you try to find one for yourself? Last year I began compiling stories, quotes, poems, anything that I think is motivational, inspiring, and helps me live a better life, and I handwrite it into a blank book. It is my personal “bible”.

I memorized this one, a personal favorite:

“We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake. Not by artificial means, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn which does not forsake us in our soundest sleep. I know of no more encouraging fact of man than the unquestionable ability to elevate his life with conscious endeavor. It is wonderful to be able to paint a particular painting or carve a statue, and so to make a few objects beautiful. But it is far more glorious to be able to paint and to carve the atmosphere and the medium through which we look and through which we live: to Affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of the arts”

– Henry David Thoreau

Affect the quality of the Day. Day by day. Moment by moment. A little bit is a lot.

“When we use artificial fertilizer to make artificial soil it grows artificial plants that feed artificial animals that end in artificial humans who can only be kept alive with artificials”

- Sir Albert Howard, the Father of Organic Agriculture, said this in 1940

The WHY for eating real food from local farms and ranches is to take a stance against the artificial. Eat Real food to be Here now, to live in full. You will thank yourself for it.

The unfortunate reality is that most of us eat artificial food. Your chicken was pumped up with chemicals and selectively bred to grow as fat as fast as possible; your cows and pigs are confined in feed lots, fed foods they never evolved to eat, all to make them grow as fat as possible at the lowest price, a grotesque abuse of animals; your salads and veggies are grown on soil that was sprayed with weed killers, killing the organic matter in the soil and leaving the soil dead meaning that the soil does not retain water so we waste more and more water trying to keep our dead soil alive creating a perpetual “drought”, and then the only way to grow food on the dead soil is to inject petroleum derived fertilizers and other chemicals into the soil, all in a futile attempt to replicate what existed before we destroyed it.

If you are indifferent to food, you are indifferent to the food you are using to fuel your body and your mind, indifferent to the degradation of the soil and the earth, indifferent to the

miracles of life that are animals and vegetables and fruits, indifferent to the farmers and delivery drivers and cashiers who work their entire lives around making your consumption convenient. This can change, and you can change it.

Be the Change you wish to see in the world

You can make the decision to be aware of who grows your food and where and how they grow it. This will change how you consume food, and eventually how you consume anything and everything. Resist indifference, Embrace Awareness. You will be happier and healthier, and the rest of the world will follow suit.

You'll have to make some adjustments to your lifestyle. Rather, you get to make adjustments.

You get to adjust your lifestyle. Food should not be fast. Eating from restaurants, fast food, processed foods, mindless consumption centered around cost and convenience: this is not normal. Being connected to the animals and foods you eat is normal. This is good. You are reverting back to baseline. Back to a life of normalcy. Slow food is a counter to the hyper-convenient world of mindless consumption.

Opting to cook for myself before going out with friends to a restaurant, bringing my own snacks on airplanes, using beef fat to cook.

And there's a lot more I want to do: Grow my own vegetables and herbs, raise chickens for eggs, mine my own salt...

But as I've said before and will say again, a little bit is a lot. Mindful acts of consumption have a snowball effect.

You have friends come over and tell them to bring beers and buns and you supply the grill and the ground beef, and just like that being stuck in a box at a bar is replaced by many hours outside with your friends participating in one of the most ancient rituals of our time: Communal preparation and consumption of food.

Even the small acts are big: we have no idea the effects of our living truthful and mindfully.

Bringing your own coffee cup and straw to the coffee shop might feel silly, futile, not worth the effort. They serve hundreds, thousands of people a day. All in paper or plastic cups. What I do won't change anything, right? Maybe not. One single raindrop never feels responsible for the flood. What you say and do matters. What if you do it, then your friends start to do it, and randomly some of your friends' friends own a coffee shop and they think that is pretty neat and they come up with a new business idea, and they stop buying cups altogether, and they buy a few hundred dollars worth of unique cups and mugs from goodwill and various thrift stores, and the people who want their drinks to go can put a \$2 deposit down and get it back if they bring the cup or mug back, and suddenly this coffee shop that was using thousands of paper and plastic products every month uses zero. And then they start researching other sustainable practices and they start sourcing only single origin coffees, from "bird friendly" coffee farms, and they start sourcing from local bakeries and sell season produce from local farms and suddenly they are an entirely sustainable shop! And then other shops in the area and all across the world follow suit!

And my imagination is definitely off the rails right now, partly out of passion and excitement, and partly because of my swim in the bay and this Yerba Mate I'm sipping on, but hey, that sounds like a pretty neat world I'd love to live in.

We know the status quo; we know what will happen if we continue to operate business as usual. But we have no idea what could happen if we changed just a little bit. We have no idea how much of an impact living true to what we believe could have.

My buying a chest freezer and storing a quarter of a cow inside of it from a local ranch in and of itself probably has little effect on the four giant meat growers and processors that dominate the US and Global market. But what if I am vocal about my passion for locally sourced foods, and I am proud of the way I live my life? 20 people sent me their email for me to show them how and why to source locally after a single post on Instagram. Incredible! And what one of those twenty does the simplest thing and stops buying their produce and food from Trader Joe's and starts a weekly CSA box, or they go to the farmer's market and talk to their local farmers, or they go out to volunteer on a farm once a month, or they go to the local coffee shop and bring their own mug instead of going to Starbucks. And they opt for a piece of locally grown fruit for dessert or even a local expensive fancy ice cream instead of a bulk, cheaply made and mass produced dessert?

And then what if one of the twenty who I send this document too went wild and bought a chest freezer and bought some meats in bulk from a local farm? Suddenly you aren't going out to eat and you're saving money and you feel better than you've ever felt, both because the food you are eating is more nutrient dense than the food you ate previously, and because you are helping make the world a better place.

Then what if of their network of hundreds one or two learns of it and does it too. And then sooner or later more and more and more people. And even if the ripple effects are nowhere near as strong as I imagine I am proud of how I spend my dollar, proud of how I consume, proud of how I live.

And then lets say you get even weirder, and you get a compost toilet, and maybe you shower less and swim in the bay or ocean or river or lake more often, or you take shorter showers, and you stop buying so much new stuff, and you start frequenting thrift stores and garage sales, and you start to meet your neighbors and talk to people who live so close to you who you've never met before and you are watching less TV and going for walks instead and you see your neighbors even more, and suddenly you've formed a community just like that, and then you learn of some other hobbies, like making your own clothes, binding your own journals and sketchbooks, baking your own bread... You find the magic and beauty in Doing it yourself.

And you are on your phone less, consuming less, and you have more time to do what you want to do, and mindlessness has transformed into mindfulness and you are GROWING and you feel it and other people feel it and you tell them about it and they get curious and start to try stuff out and we have no idea how far the effects of living mindfully can spread, we have no idea how good life could be.

Absurdly Optimistic? You bet. And proud of it. I choose to be happy because it is good for my health.

The "philosophy" behind mindful living is a topic I've written much more about and would turn

this short pamphlet into a lengthy book. Here are some quotes to ponder and build anticipation for my eventual book...

“One single man who stops lying can bring down a tyranny” – Alexander Solzhenitsyn, author of the Gulag Archipelago, which has been called one of the most important pieces of literature of the 20th century and has been credited with playing a major role in the dissolution of the tyrannical Soviet Union

and a few more...

“Be the change you wish to see in the world”

“The wisdom of the world is to be found in the world, and not in a closet”

“Only one attains the goal”

“What you want most is to be found where you least want to look”

“Traveler, there is no path. Paths are made by walking”

“If we fail to make the unconscious conscious, it will control our lives and we’ll call it fate”

Alright, that's enough.

Some alternatives

Ryan, this is all well and good. But I am not going to go out and get a chest freezer and buy 100lbs of meat. It's cool that you do it and all that, but I just can't right now because of X,Y,Z.
That's OK. A little bit is a lot.

Buy 100% grass fed beef. Pastured Pork and Chicken that eat only organic grains. Buying ethically raised meats from safeway, wholefoods, trader joes, is better for you and for the world. A little bit is a lot.

A good alternative to supermarkets is your local butcher. You can source from a farm, and it is often a bit cheaper than the store.

I've also heard great things about butcher box. But there's something to be said about reducing the people in between you and your food. To buy direct from the farmer is both more economical and you build up your community by creating a genuine connection with a farm and the farmer and the animals. More mindful and more aware is always better than less mindful and less aware.

PRODUCE, and all things Not Meat

Getting produce from the farmer's market is convenient and pleasant: great way to meet locals, talk to farmers and learn about farms. Unfortunately, products like meat, seafood, and dairy are overpriced at these markets. Also, there are many stands that are not organic, who use pesticides and fertilizers. Keep your eyes open for signs that say “organic”, although sometimes the small farms don't pay for the certification as the certification process is often not worth the money. Talk to people about how they grow their food.

Another great option is joining a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, often called a “CSA Box”.

LocalHarvest.org is a great resource. Googling “CSA in X location” works well too if Local Harvest doesn’t have much.

The CSA Box is a selection of whatever is in season on the farm. A good option in the Bay Area is Full Belly Farm CSA: It costs around \$25 per week for an assortment of whatever is in season... for Wednesday March 29, 2023, the CSA contained Beets, carrots, chard, leeks, lettuce, mandarin oranges, and potatoes. And they include recipes and ideas for how to use it all! How to cook Chard, how to use the Carrot stems/leaves, etc.

Often the CSA programs will let you add on stuff: so you can add eggs, flour, honey, bread, and other products from farms they’ve partnered up with.

The farms have various pickup locations and days where your food will be available once a week (or whenever you choose to receive the box: biweekly, monthly, etc)

Make your own foods as much as possible. Do just one day where you can only use the BASE ingredients. You want cookies? Bake them from scratch, and try to use local ingredients.

Want bread? Bake it yourself! And no cheating; use a starter you made yourself... It takes less than 30 minutes over the course of a week to make your own starter!

Eggs: We are the only country in the world that refrigerates our eggs. Why? Because big factory farms shoved chickens into tiny boxes and pumped em up with chemicals and all their bodily fluids mixed in with the eggs and it was a disgusting atrocity and unsurprisingly people got sick and thanks to our government’s absurd allowance of lobbying, instead of changing the horrendous factory farming practices that led to the health outbreaks, we just mandated that all egg producers, even the ones with sanitary practices, who let the chickens live as chickens live, are required by law to wash their POROUS eggs in a chlorine-water solution which kills the protective layer of the egg and lowers nutrient density.

Bread: Naturally leavened. You can buy a dense loaf of bread from a local bakery for \$6 or \$7. This bread tastes better and is better for you. And you’ll eat less of it! Why? Because it is REAL food. Flour, water, and salt. That’s it. (And the “starter”, if it is naturally leavened, is flour and water mixed together that fermented)

WHAT if I am vegetarian, or I rarely eat meat?

No matter what you eat, Be Mindful. Do your research. Do you eat locally and seasonally? Where does your food come from, and how is the land farmed? Poor farming with fruits and veggies is just as destructive for the earth and perhaps even moreso than eating meat. And if you are a vegetarian who is indifferent to where your food comes from, you are doing more harm to the planet than someone who eats meat every day and sources it ethically and responsibly.

Animals raised as nature intended adds to the organic matter of soil. Someone who abstains from eating meat for environmental and ethical reasons but does not source their foods mindfully and is not aware of where their food comes from or how it was grown is doing a

disservice to themselves and to the world. To grow cheap, mass market fruits and vegetables all year round requires petroleum based fertilizer and weed killers which destroy the soil. And on top of the soil destruction, they are extremely labor intensive, meaning you are reaping the benefits of the physical labor of folks who are underpaid and underappreciated and you don't think about them at all. And then your food is packaged and shipped from all over the US and the world to your store and you buy your things and leave without even caring to learn the name of the cashier who hands you your receipts and tells you to "have a nice day", and you might not have even heard because your airpods are in the whole time.

Michael Pollan's advice to only eat foods that were around before the 1900s is a basic rule to follow. In other words, avoid all processed foods.

BEEF Numbers:

Comparison: getting the same amount of similar quality meat from Whole Foods will cost 2,030.31, and this is without the chest freezer! So add \$200 for that = \$2,230.31
(Whole Foods numbers: 15 lbs. steaks/ nice cuts @ 33.49 = 502.35, 102lbs GB at 14.98= 1,527.96)

In one year you will save over \$1,000, by buying beef direct from a ranch compared to Whole Foods! And that \$1,000 is just a drop in the bucket of benefits, as you will become a better cook, feel mentally grounded, physically healthier, spiritually connected to your world, a member of the mindful consumption community, deeply connected to the entire process of life and death.

The tangible benefits: you will be healthier because 100% grass-fed beef is more nutrient dense and better for your health. And you'll be saving money.

The intangibles: Being connected to food, not participating in mindless consumption and all the effects of it (watch FOOD Inc., read Fast Food Nation), supporting local community,

*As a side note: Even if the well raised foods were significantly more expensive, it'd be worth the money. Food should not be cheap! Cheap food is an illusion, as you don't see the hidden costs of the subsidies used to make the foods nor the repercussions of eating bad food: heart disease, obesity, cavities, overeating. These costs are not added into the prices of foods. That's a rant I'll save for another time...

NUMBERS:

Good Earth (a local, organic grocery store)

- Stemple Creek Ranch Grass-fed and Organic
- Beef Stew Meat: \$14.98
- Ground Beef: \$14.98
- Boneless Chuck Roast: 13.98
- Ribeye Boneless: 33.49
- Raw milk from Raw Farm : 16.98/gal
- @ farmer's market: 6/quarter gal, and 3 deposit per bottle: Over \$30/ gallon!

Costco (pic from fisher) NOT grass fed

- Kirkland Organic ground beef: 4lbs for 24.99, 6.25 / lb.
- Wagyu ground beef 75% lean: 3 lbs. for 15.99

CRUNCHING numbers

- 100 pounds of Ground beef
- Good earth: $\$15 \times 100 = \1500 (and what would sales tax be?)
- Yolo GB: $\$8 \times 100 = \800 , plus 200 chest freezer: = 1,000.
- Add in utility cost: 60/year.
- Yolo GB and all other cuts: $\$9.75 \times 100 = 975$, plus 200, = 1175. Even with steaks, much cheaper than GE.

The local market on Polk: 117 lbs of meat for \$1,344... \$1,544 if with \$200 chest freezer
102lbs of GB @9.50= \$949, 15lbs steak @ 25= \$375

From local market on Polk Street (100% grass fed)

- 100%Grass fed ground beef
- 85% lean: 8.99
- 93% lean: 10.99
- 100% Grass fed stew meat: 11.99
- Beef tenderloin Filet Mignon: 34.99
- Top sirloin steak: 18.99
- boneless ribeye: 24.99

What about shopping at the butcher shop?

Marina Meats:

First light 100% grass-fed wagyu (what I raised in WA)
Filet mignon- 49.99/lb.

Five dot ranch

Local pastured short rib

13.99

Five dot local pastured 80/20 ground beef

9.99

90/10- 10.99

Let's cut it down the middle, call it \$10.50. Note that it says "pastured". Pastured does not equal 100% grass fed. You can have a cow out on pasture and feed it grain. It might be better for the planet compared to factory farms, but you really can't be sure. It is like the Shade Grown coffee certification: Coffee plants are supposed to grow in the shade of trees. They will grow faster in direct sunlight, at the cost of quality. The intention was to have Shade Grown mean the growers did not cut down trees to expose the plants to direct sunlight. In practice, big growers cut down forests, planted coffee plants en masse, then erected EZ ups and sun shades. Boom! Shade Grown!

So lower quality beef that is not as good for the earth, for \$10.50/lb. If you buy 100lbs of GB from this butcher versus from local ranch, it'll cost you \$250 more. And it isn't even 100% grass fed!

And this butcher shop carries veal which is not chill. A person who could eat veal with full awareness of the process is not one I'd associate with.

Many other sources of info do a better job than I at conveying the importance of mindful consumption. Here are some that have had a deep impact on my life:

Book recommendations:

First and Foremost: Joel Salatin's *Folks this Ain't Normal*. This book is what opened my eyes to this world, and over the course of 4 years is what led me to work on a ranch full time in 2022.

Others: *Fast Food Nation* and *Salt Sugar Fat* will change the way you look at the modern food system.

The Omnivore's Dilemma, *The One Straw Revolution*, *Silent Spring*, *Desert Solitaire* are all well worth a read.

Podcasts

Joe Rogan: Michael Pollan, Joel Salatin,
Richard Perkins on Peak Human (this interview is awesome. Thanks for the rec, Jonah)

Youtube: type in regenerative farming, or sustainable farming, and you'll find some wholesome, interesting videos.

Also, David Foster Wallace's commencement speech "This is Water"

And a documentary: Food Inc.

Websites: Slow Food, EatWild, WestonPrice, and LocalHarvest are invaluable resources.

Wow, you made it to the end. Congrats. What do you get for this grand accomplishment? The greatest gift of all: Awareness. You've made moves to save yourself, and the rest of the world will follow suit. A mindful life is second to none. Remember, a little bit is a lot. Keep it up. If you have any thoughts on how I can improve this document in any way, let's chat!

This is my first personal writing project and I appreciate you for reading it. You rock! Every time I come back to this document, I add more and more and more and it's time to cut it off and send it out. I have lots more writing which I am compiling into a book so stay tuned for that. It's a mix of philosophy, wild musings and rants, and some fun farm stories.

As a personal thank you for reading this, send me your mailing address and I'll handwrite you a handwritten letter with one of my famous Haikus.

Lots of Love,

Ryan Walter Hедум.