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Growing A Farmer: How I Learned To Live Off The Land



Synopsis

When he purchased four acres of land on Vashon Island, Kurt Timmermeister was only looking for an affordable home near the restaurants he ran in Seattle. But as he slowly settled into his new property, he became awakened to the connection between what he ate and where it came from: a hive of bees provided honey, a young cow could give fresh milk, an apple orchard allowed him to make vinegar. With refreshing honesty, Timmermeister details the initial stumbles and subsequent realities he faced as he established a profitable farm for himself. Personal yet practical, *Growing a Farmer* will entirely recast the way we think about our relationship to the food we consume.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 9 hours and 26 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Audible Studios

Audible.com Release Date: June 27, 2013

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B00D60KYNY

Best Sellers Rank: #101 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Nonfiction > Lifestyle & Home >

Cooking #190 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Science > Technology & Engineering #245

in Books > Science & Math > Agricultural Sciences > Animal Husbandry

Customer Reviews

This book, and the author's attitude throughout the book, left me feeling very confused. On the one hand, I really agreed with some of the author's points and outlooks about farming. On the other hand, sometimes I thought the author seemed to have a pretty callous lack of responsibility as regarded his animals, which really rubbed me the wrong way. To start off with the good points:~ I liked how the book was broken down into discussions of the different eclectic aspects of the author's farm. All of the different animals (sheep and goats, bees, cows, pigs, and fowl) and the garden were each given their own chapters, and the author outlined his journey learning about and dealing with each of them.~I liked how the author recognized and appreciated the importance of good clean food - and a lot of his discussion is about food. He said, "My wish for this book is to add a perspective on the food we eat: where it comes from, what goes into producing it and how it was

traditionally prepared." In my opinion, he accomplishes this goal very well.~I agree with and deeply respect the author's outlook on slaughtering animals, and his description of the process and the care that he takes with it was hands-down my favorite part of the book. As a small farmer myself, I am familiar with slaughtering animals and have a very particular way that I like to get things done - as efficiently and with as little pain and suffering to the animals as possible - which the author also made a big point of. Now for the harsh part: I do understand that this is a story about a journey, not a story about an immediately professional farmer, and I understand that it's not a how-to book on farming and/or animal care.

The title implies a learning process. But the book and author never develop. The "farmer" continues to do things the same way for twenty years, without learning much more than he needs to "survive." The book reads in parts like a monologue in a diary, and these I enjoyed. Other reviewers claim honesty and humor from the author. This is true because he is very honest about his naivete, ignorance and love for his favorite things. He laughs at his own idiocy as he learns. At other times, the book is full of directives I would be afraid of attempting, due to their lack of detail and responsibility. He claims to be as close to sustainable as possible, and argues that of the few things he doesn't make himself, he will never make his own salt. But he purchases new animals, trees and seeds every year. He looks to traditional recipes from the old country, then excuses his own inability to duplicate them by claiming he is creating a new tradition that doesn't need to be like the old. He dismisses others' criticism without thought or research. He knows nothing of guns, but because it still kills his pigs, he's happy with the .30-30 his friend lent him. The biggest offense was his explanation on how things should be done. He gives the most basic direction, i.e. the ball joint where the leg bone meets the pelvis, but is so dismissive of anything extra because he doesn't understand it. In the chapter on slaughter, the author says the animal on the table is no longer an animal, but a slab of meat, because he lacks the ability to imagine the carcass whole as he butchers it. His farm's success comes from his weekend dinners, and he has professional experience owning restaurants.

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