2001

Foodways

FOODWAYS

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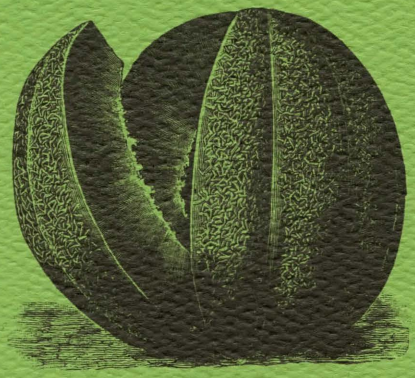


People are thinking a lot more about what they eat since *Foodways* debuted in 2001. Terms like *"e. coli"* and "mad cow disease" have entered the public discourse. The news media proclaim that childhood obesity and diabetes have reached epidemic proportions. And a Secretary of Agriculture has warned how vulnerable our nation's food supply is to terrorist attack. More and more, people are asking: "Where does my food come from?"

Not surprisingly, many people today look closer to home for the sources of their food. *Time* magazine recently declared, "forget organic, buy local," and went on to explore the increasing national interest in local foods. People have many reasons for choosing local foods: good taste, freshness, high nutritional value, and the opportunity to contribute to the vitality of their community.

The residents of Knox County, Ohio—whose stories are told in this volume—have made a commitment to building a sustainable local food system. There's a thriving weekly farmers' market in Mount Vernon, and Knox County restaurants, grocery stores, and college dining halls feature foods purchased directly from area farmers.

Foodways continues to tell us much about how we eat and how our food choices affect not only personal well-being but the vibrancy of community life. Enjoy this reprint edition, and fix something good for supper tonight.

Howard Sacks

FOODWAYS

Foodways: an introduction

Most people don't often think about the food they eat. Food comes from the grocery store, and the only question asked is, "What's for dinner?" But in a rural community like Knox County, the farmer's daily toil to produce our food shapes much of the local economy, landscape, and culture. Mealtime brings together family and friends, and special recipes passed down through the generations provide a connection to heritage and history.

Lately, stories in the national media have caused some to stop taking food for granted. In February 2001, the Food and Drug Administration discovered that cattle in a Texas feedlot had eaten contaminated feed linked to the spread of mad cow disease in Great Britain and Europe. In a national poll at the time, nearly half of those sampled expressed concern about the disease becoming a problem in the United States.

Large-scale product recalls occurred recently when genetically modified corn, approved only for animal feed, was discovered in taco shells and other foods meant for human consumption. In response to increased consumer concern about the treatment of animals at factory farms and slaughterhouses, McDonald's has set animal-handling standards for its meat suppliers. A news story about a Virginia woman who was startled to find a chicken head among the wings she had ordered at a fast-food restaurant stimulated this letter to the editor of Cleveland's *Plain Dealer*: "It's high time for American consumers to wake up, find out where their food comes from, and learn to live with the consequences."

> It's high time for American consumers to wake up, find out where their food comes from, and learn to live with the consequences.
>
> —*The Plain Dealer*

But thinking about food involves more than expressing concern over the stories behind sensational headlines. Food constitutes an important part of everyday life. In events such as the Danville-Howard Turkey Festival and the Fredericktown Tomato Show, food symbolically defines our collective identity as a community.

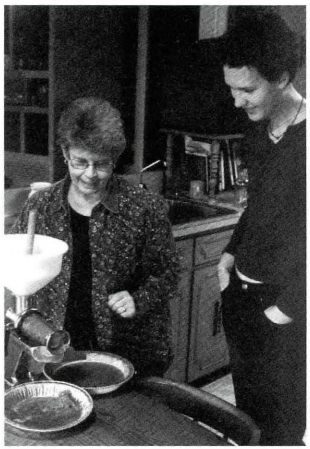
A dozen Kenyon College students have been spending a year exploring Knox Countians' relationships with food. Enrolled in my course "Fieldwork," the students conduct numerous interviews and actively participate in local life. They visit livestock auctions and farmers' markets, work at soup kitchens, attend Kiwanis luncheons, and accompany hunters through the woods. They interview restaurant owners, Amish healers, 4-H medal winners, and farmers.

In the course of their research, the class meets regularly to discuss what they are learning. "We all eat. It's something that connects everyone," remarks one student. "It seems so simple, but we often forget it." Several students note the importance of mealtime for sharing information about our lives: "A meal is not simply something you

have to achieve; it's a time to reflect." The opportunity that food provides for making interpersonal connections stands in marked contrast to the social opportunity missed in consuming fast food: "What makes fast food desirable is the speed; the means of eating becomes an end in itself."

Taking eating for granted assumes that food is readily available and that everyone has the money to buy it. But many people in this county don't have enough food, and it's increasingly difficult for family farmers to make a living producing the food we eat. Local foodways include the dedication of those who feed the hungry and the innovative efforts of farmers who provide nutritious and plentiful food.

The students are particularly struck by the efforts of new farmers in the area. Typically engaged in small-scale, alternative agriculture, these new farmers take part in a localized food system that seeks to minimize the distance between food producers and consumers and to keep food dollars working within the community. The recent success of the new farmers' market in Mount Vernon's Public Square suggests the popularity of this approach among consumers.



Kenyon student Lisa Groesz watches Kate Brown, Fredericktown, as she grinds tomatoes with her Victorio strainer. Photo by Elena Rue

In doing their research, the students—who come from a range of settings, from small towns to major metropolitan centers—have learned a great deal about Knox County. Unlike people in the city, local residents have impressed them as very friendly and interested in talking. As one states, "People from Knox County know how to have a good conversation. They want to know about you and are willing to talk about themselves." As newcomers who have taken the time to get to know the people of Knox County, these students have gained a unique vantage point. They hope that sharing their research will enable people to "see food and community with fresh eyes, see things others often take for granted and realize how important they are to this community."

Foodways includes a series of twelve features on a variety of subjects: from gardening to the dollars and cents of food, eating out to food's healing powers, and the history of food markets to ritual food. These stories introduce readers to people involved in the local food system, and a recipe from an area resident accompanies each feature. *Foodways* debuted in the *Mount Vernon News* in the summer of 2001.

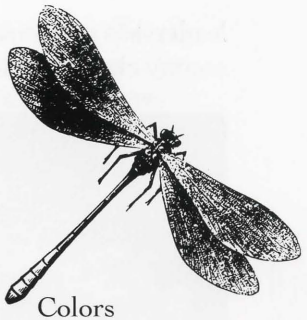
Foodways is a project of Kenyon College's Rural Life Center. The Rural Life Center promotes education, scholarship, and public projects about rural life. Through collaboration with central Ohio residents, the center seeks to enhance the quality of rural community life. Our recent efforts include the Family Farm Project and *Life along the Kokosing*. For more information, contact me at 740-427-5850 or visit the Rural Life Center's website at http://rurallife.kenyon.edu.

The students who wrote these stories want to take this opportunity to thank the community members who so warmly have welcomed them into their homes and workplaces. They hope that *Foodways* will share what they have learned: that how we eat says a lot about how we live.

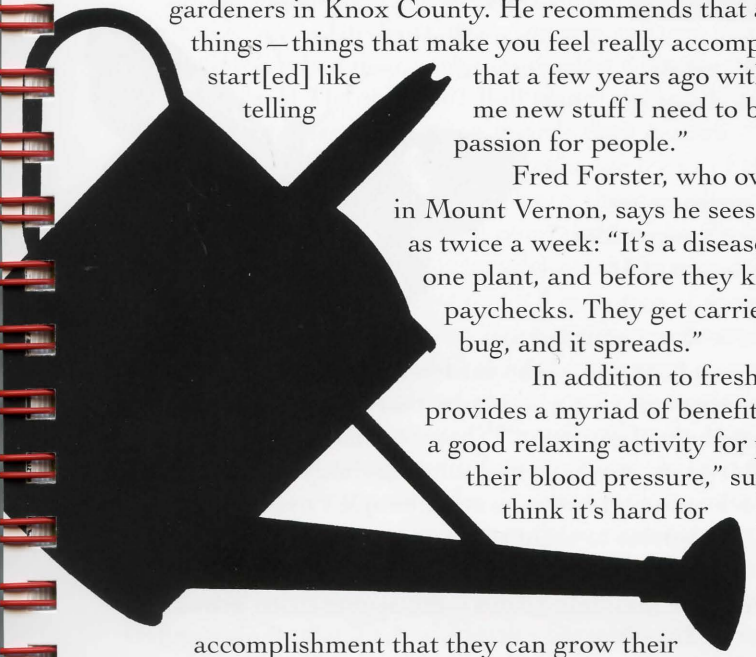
Howard Sacks is Professor of Sociology and Director of the Rural Life Center at Kenyon College. Sacks and his family raise sheep and hay on their farm outside Gambier.

GARDENS

Inch by inch, row by row



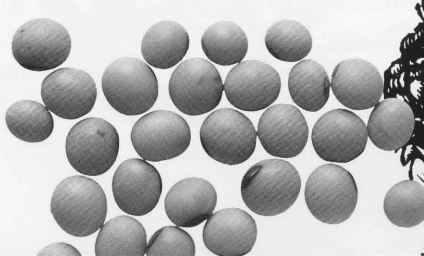
It's springtime all year round for Steve Pletcher, owner of Country Colors Greenhouse in Amity. He will eventually fill his ten greenhouses with everything from annuals to vegetable plants: "10-15% of our business comes from the three or four Sundays in May." Pletcher serves as the supplier and guide for many vegetable gardeners in Knox County. He recommends that amateurs "start with easier things—things that make you feel really accomplished. We have people who start[ed] like that a few years ago with a couple of things. Now they're telling me new stuff I need to be growing! It gets to be quite a passion for people."



Fred Forster, who owns Glass Garden Greenhouse in Mount Vernon, says he sees some of his customers as often as twice a week: "It's a disease. People come here and buy one plant, and before they know it, they've spent their whole paychecks. They get carried away with it. It's a gardening bug, and it spreads."

In addition to fresh produce, gardening provides a myriad of benefits. "It's proven it's a good relaxing activity for people—it lowers their blood pressure," suggests Forster. "I think it's hard for people these days to see an accomplishment in their lives. They can say, 'I made more dollars,' but it's an accomplishment that they can grow their own beans, or to grow the biggest tomato." Friendly competition between neighbors often brings customers into Forster's store.

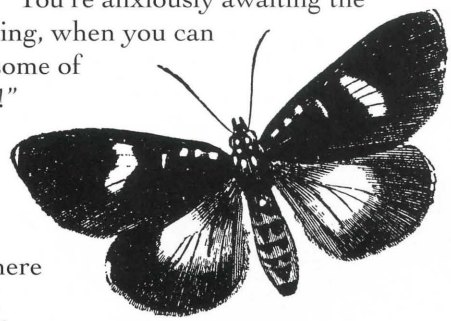
"Working in the garden, working with plants, in fact anything you do with your hands, is good therapy," explains Ruth Smella of Walhonding. "It's really good to be out in the fresh air and sunshine." An avid gardener since childhood, Smella has belonged to groups affiliated with the Ohio Association of Garden Clubs (for which she is an accredited judge) for over thirty years. She has held numerous



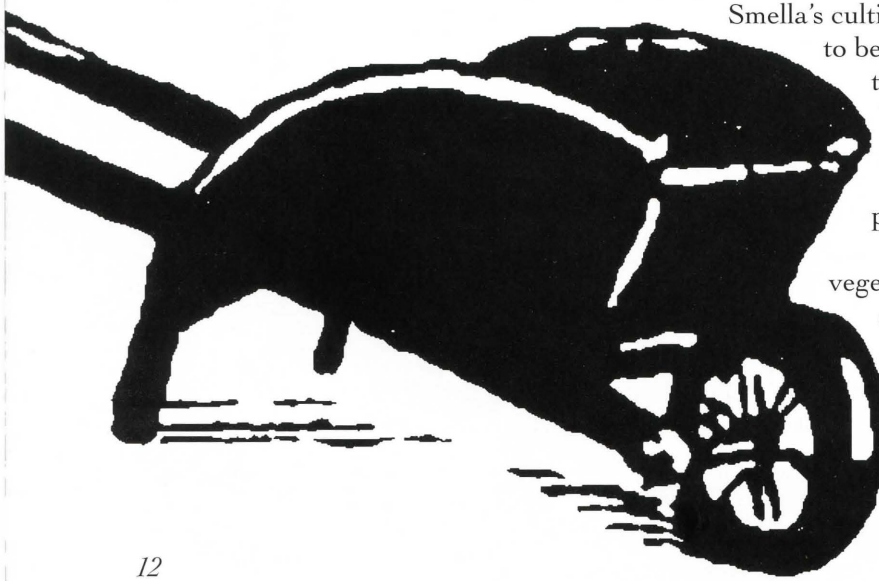
leadership positions in the gardening community, including president of the local and county clubs and the four-year state chairman of the Junior Garden Clubs.

Dan Miller, an Amish carpenter from Waterford, raises several garden beds. Photo by Luis Alejandro Madrigal-Mercado

Growing more than what she can use in her own kitchen, Smella shares the vegetables from her garden with her family: "We like fresh vegetables—and it's so nice to go out and pick a nice, fresh, crisp cucumber, instead of the ones at the store that sometimes look rubbery." It's the harvest that this seasoned gardener looks forward to most of all. Smella says, "You're anxiously awaiting the fruiting, when you can eat some of that!"



Smella passed her love of gardening on to her son Fred. "If you grow up with vegetables," he explains, "it gives you an appreciation of life—where these things come from, and that work is part of it. I think with kids, it's important to have that connectedness early." Growing up while working on a farm and in the garden helped foster Fred Smella's cultivating spirit—a philosophy that he feels is integral to being a good gardener: "There is some sort of instinct that gardeners have that not everybody has. People who are perceptive to other people's needs and are helpful to them are the same way with plants. They're more in tune. And if you once feel that or perceive that, that grows—the appreciation grows."



Together, they maintain the family flower and vegetable garden. Fred comments, "Mom's thinking about what plants she wants, and I enjoy the engineering aspect of it—laying it all out." Each year, he adds a new raised bed, elevated six inches to protect the plants from weeds and flooding and to make maintenance of the garden easier. Along with a few shaded benches, the beds create a distinct aesthetic to the space that Fred feels is equally important: "You can appreciate gardening,

and you can appreciate making something look pretty—but you need to also absorb it or just be in it. Yes, all the hoeing and the cultivating and the planting are good in themselves—but you need to sit down and just enjoy looking at it and being there."

For most gardeners, cultivation is only part of the fun. For Katie Ball of Fredericktown, "eating the food is the best part." Although she is only sixteen, Ball is an experienced and accomplished gardener. "My grandparents on both sides did it, and it goes back from there. It runs in the family." She started gardening at age nine and has been competing through her local 4-H club ever since, winning a Superior in her first year. Ball explains that during the summer, gardening is her primary hobby. "It's fun and it's interesting to see the results of things," she says. "And we eat a lot of vegetables. There's lots of things to make out of them, so they don't go to waste. My family, we're big tomato eaters."

No matter how experienced, all gardeners face many of the same challenges. Too much rain, a late frost, or an unexpected pest can ruin a plant. Even more frustrating is when deer, moles, and other animals snack on a vegetable before the gardener does! The solution? Ball plants marigolds around her plants to ward off pests, while the Smellas' dog, Amber, guards their garden.

Although gardeners often exchange tricks of the trade with each other, most growers feel that the best way to learn about gardening is through experience. While Forster offers his services as "a plant doctor," he explains that the secret to a successful garden is "like anything that you do—you learn by doing it. It's hands on. If you follow the books, you'll only get 80% of it."

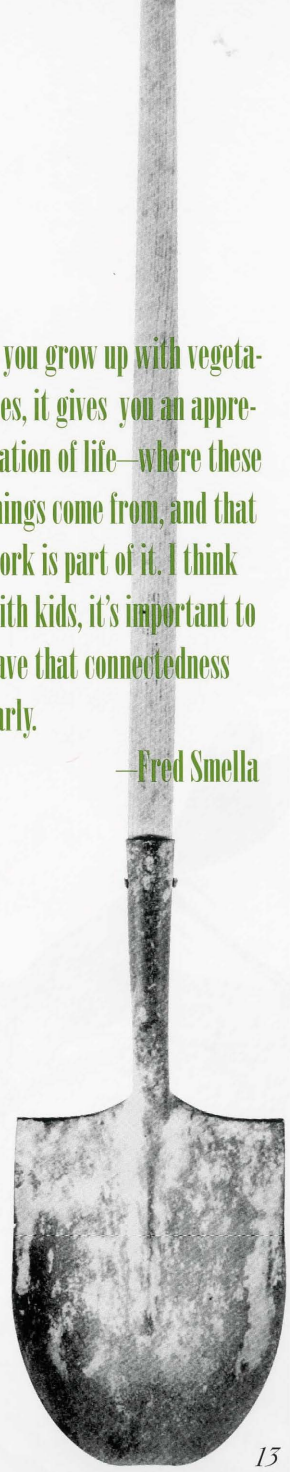
The Ohio State University Extension—Knox County office offers research-based information for the full span of gardening queries. Research on a broad range of topics is compiled into fact sheets available to gardeners, both in print and online. When the office became overwhelmed with calls, they developed the Master Gardener Program to train members of the community to field these questions. "They go through quite an extensive training class in plant biology," explains agent Joe Cochran. "It's ten weeks, one day a week." Once these students complete the class, they are asked to donate fifty hours of volunteer service to the community, sharing their expertise.

Although gardening is a long-standing tradition in Knox County, fads started by Home and Garden TV and Martha Stewart are stirring the popular interest and "the knowledge [that] is bringing in the next generation," says Forster. With smaller families and with other food resources readily available, typical Knox County gardeners are hobby growers.

Forster believes that gardeners gain the most satisfaction from the simple act of cultivating. "Today one lady came in just to see something growing, because it made her feel better." Pletcher observes that although "older people have a tradition of gardening, younger people are getting into it. You come full circle." As Fred Smella explains, "I think it's a fundamental of life. You need things to sustain yourself, and this is natural—this is how it was from the beginning. You get what you make."

If you grow up with vegetables, it gives you an appreciation of life—where these things come from, and that work is part of it. I think with kids, it's important to have that connectedness early.

—Fred Smella

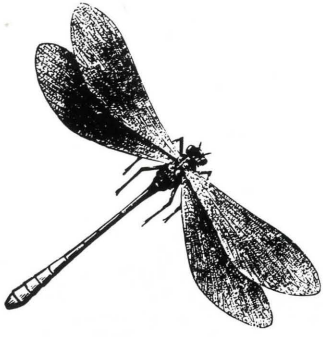


A budding gardener

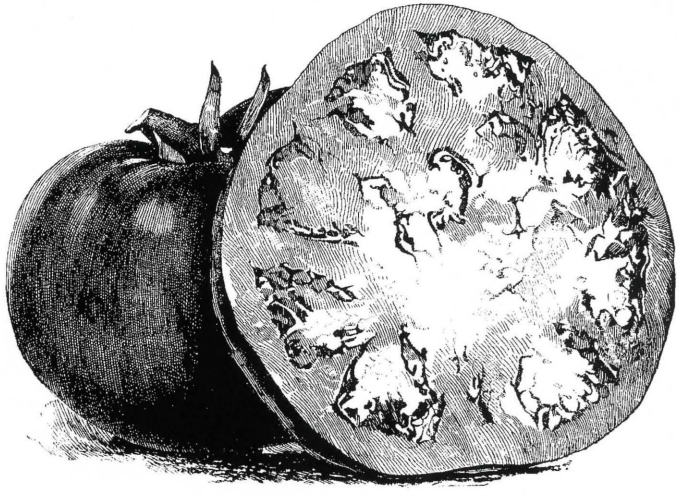
Although Dashau Knight is only in sixth grade, she has been gardening for almost a decade. Knight remembers how she got her start under the watchful eye of her grandparents: "I was two or three, and I remember going down there just in my diaper and playing in the mud, thinking I was helping." She credits members of her family as her most important teachers: "I learned from my mom and dad, because [gardening] has been passed down from generation to generation."

Althea Dye (left) leads an activity on respect with 4-H member Dashau Knight (right), who reads off a scenario for group discussion. Photo by Karla Tibbetts

What was once "messin' in the dirt" has turned into a hobby and talent for Knight, who considers gardening one of her favorite activities. Knight is now responsible for growing several different vegetables in her garden—which is still on her grandparents' land—including corn, cucumbers, tomatoes and, most recently, lima beans. "It's a lot of fun and easy to do," she explains. And it's practical. Not only does her family enjoy "the taste of fresh food, it's cheaper to can it. In the winter, we won't have to go out and buy it."



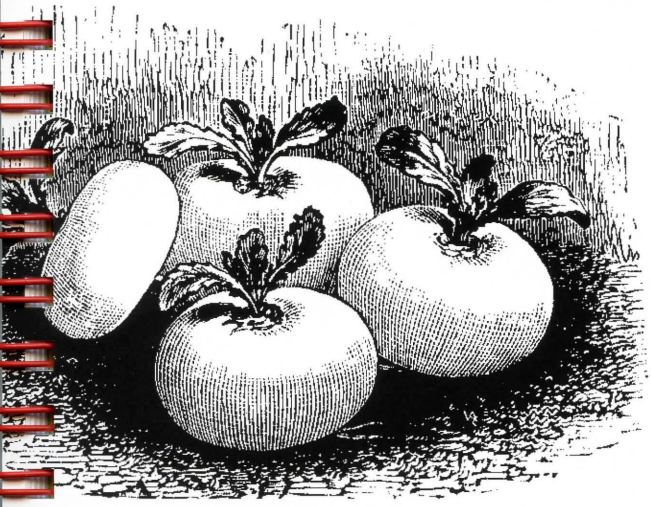
Knight learned early on that gardening "takes a lot of patience and responsibility." Whether it's the seemingly never-ending chore of weeding or compensating for unexpected weather, Knight knows that all her hard work will pay off when the plants finally harvest. Her favorite part about growing a vegetable is "picking it…and eating it."



There is a sense of accomplishment in seeing a plant from seed to fruit: "You're proud of it, and you can say to people, 'I grew this—I did it.'" Knight's successes were rewarded last year at the Knox County Fair, which she attended as a member of the Howard Workers 4-H club.

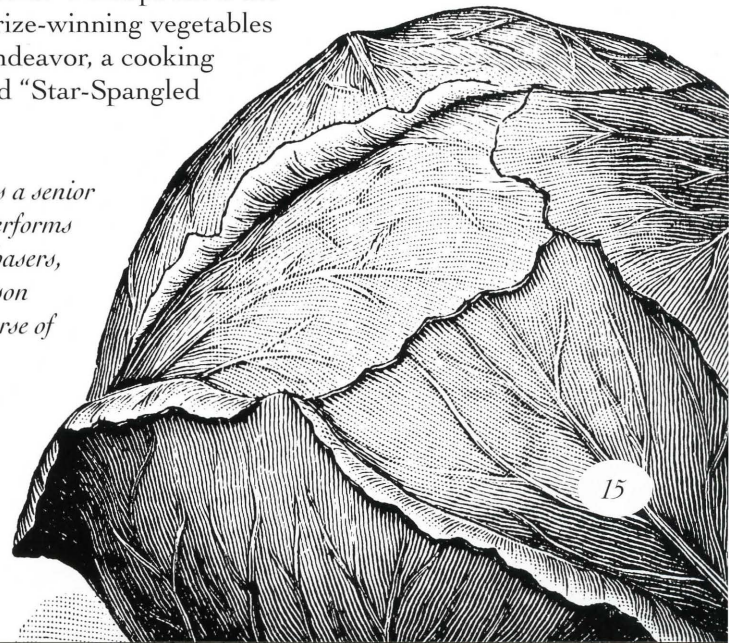
As the nation's largest youth organization, 4-H involves more than 286,000 young people. Members can choose from over two hundred projects, ranging from raising animals to clothing construction to food science, all geared toward developing responsibility and good citizenship.

4-H is also an opportunity for kids to have fun with each other. Knight serves as recreation director for her club. "Dashau's a very fun individual; she's very energetic," says Althea Dye, who directs the club along with her husband, Chris Fletcher. "She's very take-charge—you give her a task and she does it. Anytime I ask for anything, Dashau just jumps right in."



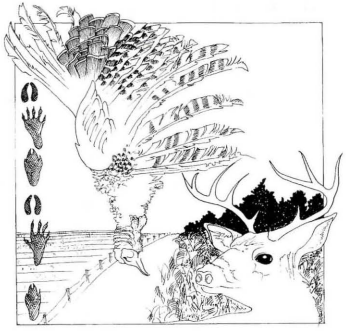
Notwithstanding her previous successes, Knight will present something different from last year when the fair begins on July 22. She is pursuing another one of her interests through a 4-H project entitled "Creative Writing for Teens." Perhaps she'll use some of her prize-winning vegetables in her other endeavor, a cooking project entitled "Star-Spangled Foods."

Jenny Lawton is a senior American studies major from River Forest, Illinois. At Kenyon, she performs with the Chamber Singers and serves as the musical director of the Chasers, a coed a cappella group. Upon graduation, Lawton will pursue a Watson Fellowship, dancing in India, Turkey, Spain, and Morocco over the course of the next year.



HUNTING

The hunt for natural food



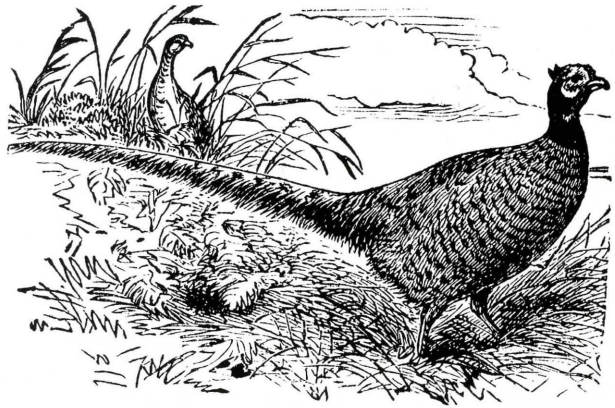
Hunting wild game is a local tradition in Knox County that goes back thousands of years. Illustration by Molly Sharp

These days, the name Mitch Rumpola is on the tip of every hunter's tongue for his role in the most publicized deer scandal in years. I am walking with Knox County wildlife officer Mike Miller along a hillside a few miles off of State Route 229, and listening as the dogs bring the cottontail around. Rumpola claims that the buck is a new world record, but without hard evidence, he'll never make the record books. Lucky for him, the controversy alone has paid him well. Miller and his friend Ralph Dickerson rehash the weekend's festivities at the national Wild Turkey Convention in Columbus. It seems that Mike Beatty of Xenia, Ohio, had been displaying his record buck. The rumor was that he received a healthy chunk of change to show it off. For Rumpola and Beatty, the value of the antlers far exceeds any food value.

The meaning of hunting has changed substantially since early inhabitants of our part of the country hunted, trapped, farmed, and gathered for survival. The Woodland Indian tribes were nomadic, moving across the mid-Ohio land following beaver, muskrat, raccoon, and deer. These tribes kept moving to stay with the animals that they needed for food. Today, hunters like Rumpola hunt for competition. Rumpola and the current world-record holder, Milo N. Hanson, are even subjected to supervised lie-detector tests to prove that they really killed the deer they claim.

While deer are by far the most popular game in the state of Ohio, smaller game are more commonly hunted for food. There is a good reason for this. In Ohio, critters such as muskrats, rabbits, and raccoons can be hunted with dogs or traps, boosting the odds of bringing something home to the dinner table. Miller explains, "A dog picks up their scent—the ones that you've never seen. So when you have a dog you get a lot more." For many years it has been a tradition for the town of Danville to hold an annual 'coon supper hosted by the Lions Club. Paul Hothem is one of the trappers, and each year the supper demands nearly 400 raccoons.

In the late 1970s, residents of Knox County were dealing with tight finances, and many part-time and recreational hunters turned full-time in an effort to feed their families at lower cost. Paul Hothem, the local extension agent at the time, worked with an economist from the Extension Office to set up a new program on preparing wild animals for the table. "The room held eighty—and we had to have two meetings," says Hothem. "You'd be surprised the number of people that wanted to know how to clean muskrats, how to get them in the freezer, and the same for groundhogs, 'coons, and the whole bit."



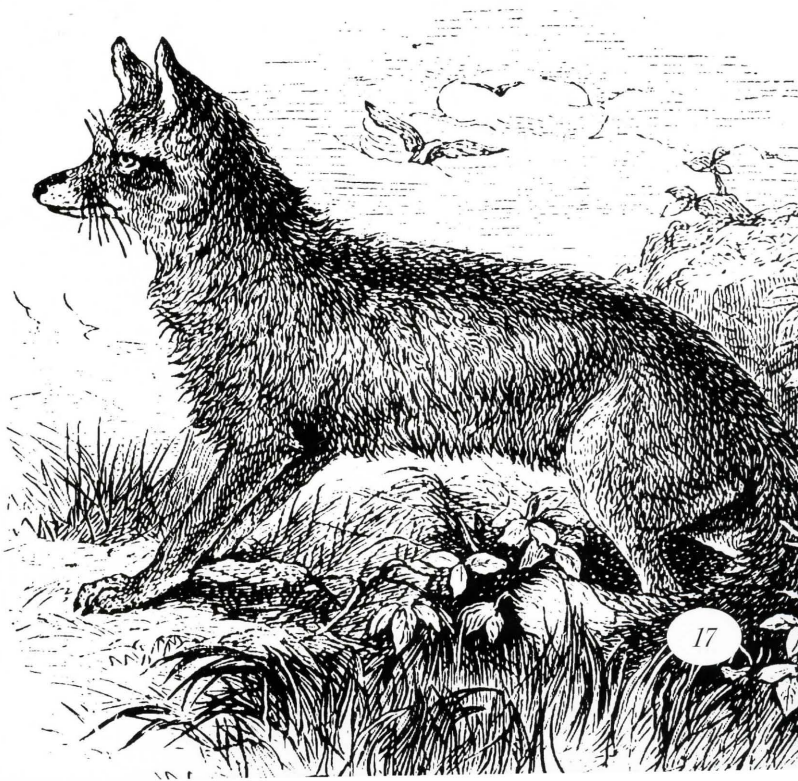
Hunting for survival is no longer necessary for most people, yet some continue to hunt for two reasons. First, those who hunt for sport usually enjoy eating what they catch. Second, the meat is much more healthful. It is lower in saturated fats and cholesterol, and it is free of chemicals, such as growth hormones, which makes it taste better.

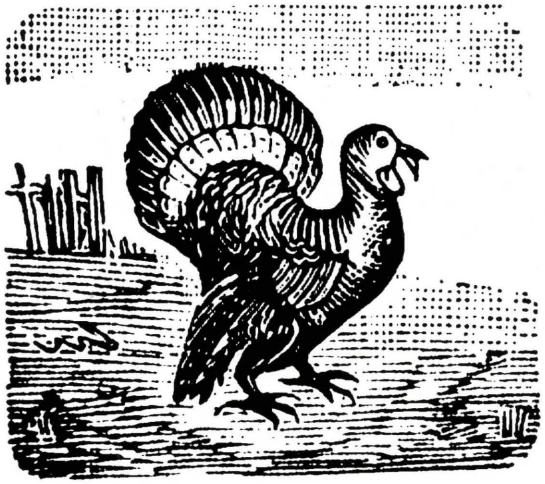
> You'd be surprised the number of people that wanted to know how to clean muskrats, how to get them in the freezer, and the same for groundhogs, 'coons, and the whole bit.
>
> —Paul Hothem

Hothem served on the board of Camp Ohio for several years and spent summers working at a camp for young people who enjoyed hunting, fishing, and trapping. As with any children's camp, a snack was served before bedtime. Instead of the customary sweets, they were served muskrat, beaver, raccoon, or whatever had been caught that day. According to Hothem, "The kids would prefer it over the cookies, and the cake, and all that kind of stuff."

The majority of people who hunt go out in small groups. Not only is it safer to hunt with others, but hunting can be a way to spend time with friends and family. Whether you're after duck, deer, rabbits, or turkey, there is plenty of time spent waiting—time that is most often spent in conversation. Thanksgiving Day is a traditional day to gather with family, and for many people that includes a hunting trip in addition to the traditional big meal. Because the basics of the sport are learned primarily from the family, this is an excellent way for parents and grandparents to teach the younger generation. Even businesses have hunting leases and will meet with clients for a hunt instead of in the office. "You can set a lot of business deals," says Miller. "I know people that that's what they do. If the people they are doing business with hunt, then that is where they do their work."

The number of young people enrolling in hunting or trapping courses has dropped substantially since Paul Hothem's childhood. In those days, trapping was a farm chore—everybody did it. Now children are out waiting for the schoolbus at 6:45 a.m. and stay after school for sports and clubs. There is less interest in hunting and trapping simply because most people don't have enough time.





Despite hectic schedules, there is one day when we are reminded of the way things were: opening day of deer gun season. Except for the city of Mount Vernon, every school in Knox County has the day off. So many people head for the woods that Mike Miller is kept pretty busy. But, he says, "It's nice to see kids out if their parents are willing to take them. That's time with their family—it's nice to see that."

Ohio state law says that you must get permission from landowners to hunt on their land, so most people hunt only in a few familiar spaces. Because it means a more extensive knowledge of the habitat and animal patterns, some hunters can get a bit territorial. Favorite locations are kept as secret as possible, and people from outside Knox County are never told where to hunt; rather, they are only told what kinds of habitat to look for. "Habitat is the key to everything." Miller speaks for many native Knox County hunters when he also observes, "People need to spend the time to get out and look for themselves."

Even long-time residents must keep an eye out for new spots, because no one is about to give away their best places. With increasing numbers of new residents, and overflow from the encroaching suburbs of Columbus, more hunters and less land increases a competitive spirit.

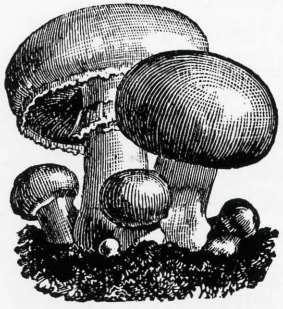
Knox County is changing, and that rate of change is accelerating with the growing popularity of a "rural lifestyle." As new houses are built, habitat is lost or altered, and this directly affects the native wild-animal populations. A local hunter comments, "Most people move to a rural environment because they want to escape crime, or have trees, and they want to have wildlife. The first thing they do is, they buy ten acres and cut down everything and keep a lawn." This removes the natural habitat and creates a barren, green space. "Then they stick up a bluebird box in the middle of the yard. That's their idea of wildlife habitat." The irony is that those who move to the "country" to be closer to wildlife instead distance themselves from it. If anything other than a bird eats the seed from their feeder they get upset. "People will only put up with so much wildlife. Period," says the hunter. This is the attitude that changes local animal habitats and pushes wild animals to seek new spaces.

Shifting habitats mean that for hunters to remain successful they must pay close attention to the environment. In order to keep finding food, it is necessary to keep an eye on the land and keep moving. Maybe we aren't so different from the early inhabitants after all.

Food and solitude

"Quiet time" is hard to come by these days, but more and more people in Knox County are finding an excuse to walk the woods in perfect silence. Mushroom hunting is a favorite pastime for a growing number of local residents, and for good reason.

James Howes has been hunting mushrooms since he was eleven: prowling golf courses and church lawns for button mushrooms with his mother. As he got older he learned about the most sought-after mushrooms, the morels, and he has been hunting them ever since.

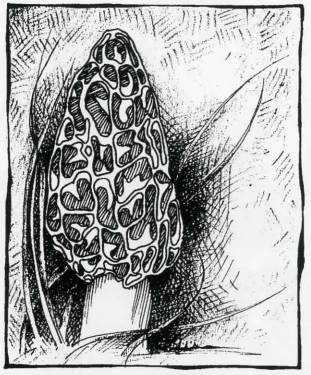


Finding morels requires a good deal more than just peaceful wandering in the woods. "A lot of people go out mushroom hunting, and they don't find much because they don't know the trees," says Howes. "The trees have a lot to do with it." Different types of the morel grow near specific species of trees, as well as in certain soil types, under the right weather conditions, at the right time of year.

"You get to the point where you learn just by looking at the soil and the vegetation around whether it's a good area," Howes notes. It is more a skill than a talent, and he is one of the best. "A lot of people say that I've gotten to the point where I can smell them. But it's not that; it's just that I've done it for so many years that I can tell."

Though Howes does hunt alone, he shares his finds with family. The morel season generally falls conveniently around Mother's Day, so he makes a point to bring some mushrooms to his mother as a gift. They can be frozen if cooked first, "so you've got to cook them a little bit, fry them just a little bit, and put them in the freezer and freeze them right away." The morel's rich and unique flavor is definitely a family favorite: "When my kids were young, I couldn't find enough of them."

The real joy of mushroom hunting is that it becomes almost a treasure hunt. Howes recalls, "There was one time when I was hunting, and I got into a patch of probably about six hundred of them. I mean they were just everywhere. You know, it's just like finding candy when you're a kid." If you know the trees and the land you can follow the signs, but the discovery is always a surprise. To be able to seek out something from among wild plants and trees, without the use of any gadgets or gizmos in this day and age, is truly amazing.

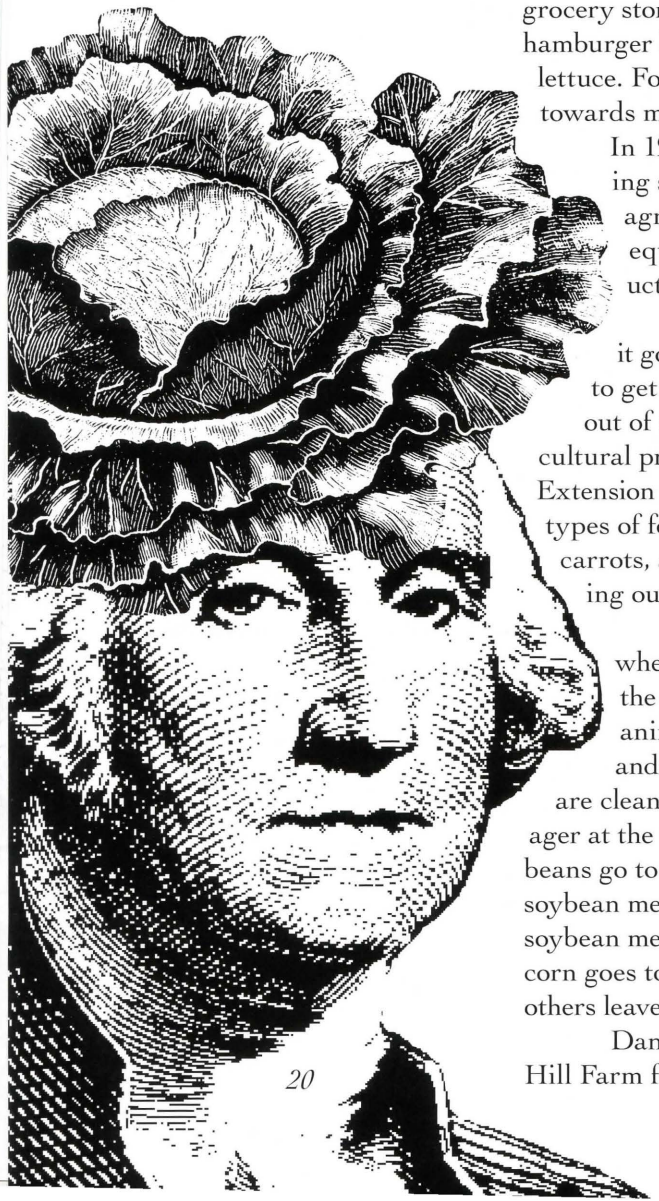


The common morel is a sponge mushroom that does most of its growing at night. Illustration by Molly Sharp

Molly Sharp is a senior sculpture major from Alexandria, New Hampshire. At Kenyon, she runs varsity cross-country and is captain of the women's varsity track team. Following graduation, Sharp will be working as an executive assistant to the CEO of Milestone Capital Management in Yonkers, New York.

ECONOMICS OF FOOD

The economic food chain



"That'll be $10.77, please," says the cashier. I pay the woman and walk out of the grocery store, carrying my bag filled with supplies for the weekend's barbecue: hamburger buns, ground beef, American cheese slices, potato chips, and a head of lettuce. For each dollar that Americans spend on domestic foods, 80 cents goes towards marketing costs and only 20 cents goes to the farmer.

In 1997, the Ohio Department of Agriculture counted 1,120 farms of varying sizes in Knox County. Those farms produced almost $70 million of agricultural products. At the same time, in 1999 Knox Countians spent an equal amount in the purchase of food. But the money and the farm products did not remain in Knox County. Where is it all going?

Sam Gilardi, co-owner of Lanning's in Mount Vernon, says, "A lot of it goes out of state. If you buy beef from Kroger or Big Bear, they're going to get boxed beef, and it's going to come from Kansas City, so that money goes out of state." While Knox County is producing a tremendous amount of agricultural products, we are still importing food. One of the Ohio State University Extension agents in Knox County, Troy Cooper, comments, "You look at all the types of food that are imported and processed from Del Monte, all your beans, carrots, and tomatoes, to the processed, microwave-ready foods. Most of it's going out of the state, out of the country."

The economic foodways of Knox County don't always end up back where they started. Local businesses provide inputs for farmers throughout the growing season: fixing machinery and purchasing seeds, fertilizers, and animal feed. The farmer produces the output—corn, soybeans, sheep, cattle, and tomatoes. The cattle then go to the processor, the fruits and vegetables are cleaned, and the milk or apple cider is pasteurized. Tim Norris, branch manager at the Central Ohio Farmers Coop in Mount Vernon, says, "A lot of our soybeans go to Central Soya or Archer Daniels Midland in Fostoria. And they make soybean meal and maybe some soybean hamburgers. The majority of it goes to soybean meal for cattle feed, and then they take the oil as well. The majority of our corn goes to South Carolina." So while some of the products stay in the state, many others leave.

Danville resident Tim Patrick has been growing organic vegetables on Toad Hill Farm for eight years, and he recognizes the external economic competition.

"What you're competing against in the organic market a lot is California, year-round really, even in the summer months," says Patrick. "It's a global economy, even here in Knox County. Especially with the bigger farmers, they're getting pushed around by the big buyers who are buying from Argentina. You know, they're that big, they don't care."

These days, making a living off of small family farms becomes difficult. "The increasing operating costs, decreasing revenues, the competitiveness, the loss of markets. We're a global market, and it's difficult for some people to compete in a global market. It's hard for them to find that market and run everything right so that they can do that," says Cooper. The shift to a global economy has resulted in a loss of local markets. Still, farmers need a way to sustain themselves when exporting is not a possibility. Patrick has his own philosophy on what to plant each year: "Don't grow it if you can't eat it." If the market isn't strong, the farmer can get by through literally eating his profits.

Local versus international competition plays a large role in the economic success of the farmer. Local markets benefit farmers because "they [farmers] have more control over the price," says Cooper. "What people are willing to pay sets a limit, but the farmers are able to look at how much it costs them and say, 'To make a profit, I have to get this much.' And they're able to do that." Farmers can have that freedom only where local markets are available.

"Whether you're a shop owner or a grocery store, depending on what you're looking for, you can look to buy the cheapest stuff, if you don't care, if that's the kind of market you're after. Or you can buy decent stuff. It depends who you're selling it to," says Patrick. Although there isn't always a price difference, Professor Kamyar Enshayan at the University of Northern Iowa believes that nonlocal food is "cheapened." In his view, the quality of nonlocal food is different. The food is cheapened as it is shipped from California to its destination; cheapened by the genetically engineered seeds that are used; and cheapened by absentee corporations and a lack of personal relations.

Suzanne Hardie, who lives near Gambier, and Debbi Tier, cashier, share a laugh at the checkout lane at the Village Market, Gambier. Photo by Leah Sokolofski

A small but growing demand for local foods in Knox County is demonstrated at farmers' markets, such as the one in the Mount Vernon Public Square. "People kind of like things to be local, so they know that, 'Well, this came from the farm over here,'" says Regina White, a Fredericktown resident. People come into her store, Taste of Country Bulk Food, in Fredericktown

People kind of like things to be local, so they know that, "Well, this came from the farm over here."

—Regina White

and ask for locally grown produce. Regarding the consumer trend of "buying local," Regina notes that people are "trying to get back to the basics instead of all the processed and chemical stuff." The opening of independently owned stores, such as Taste of Country Bulk Food and Lanning's, suggests that there is a strong interest in expanding the market for local food consumption.

The Ohio Proud program, an initiative of the Ohio Department of Agriculture, offers substantial evidence that promoting consumption of local foods helps prevent dollars from leaving the state. "That's what Ohio Proud is all about," says Gilardi. "They want to keep the business local. We've got to keep these local cattlemen alive; otherwise, we're not going to have any local cattlemen. If there are no customers that will buy the beef they raise, then we've got a real problem. All these farms that you drive up and down the road and see, they'll all go by the wayside."

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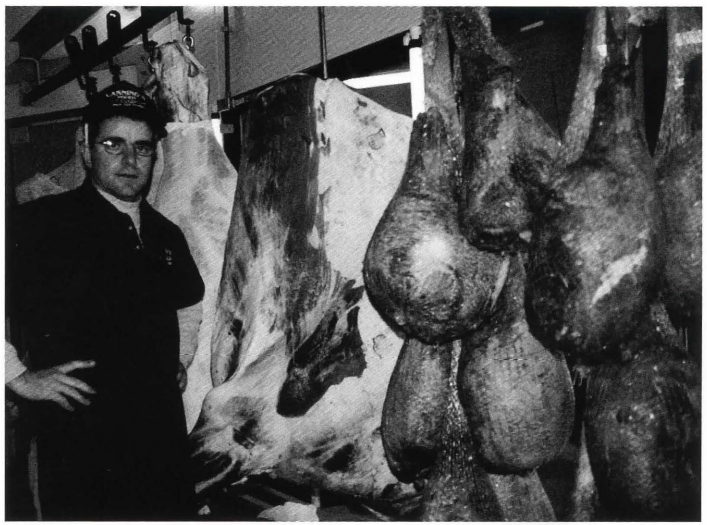
—Sam Gilardi

While not all agricultural dollars are food dollars, the county depends on healthy markets for agricultural products. Norris comments on the link between the agricultural sector and business sector of the economy: "If the agricultural community is repressed, I think the rest of the economy will follow. We still represent a large sector in this area, so if we're not spending, it's going to hurt for the rest of the businesses as well." The general economy of the county prospers when the agricultural sector prospers.

The next time you buy food, take a minute to stop and think about what it is you're really buying. In this global agricultural economy, your tomato is more likely to come from Florida or California than Knox County. Where are your dollars and cents going?



Sam Gilardi at Lanning's in Mount Vernon displays fresh local beef for customers. Photo by Leah Sokolofski

Getting back to the way it used to be

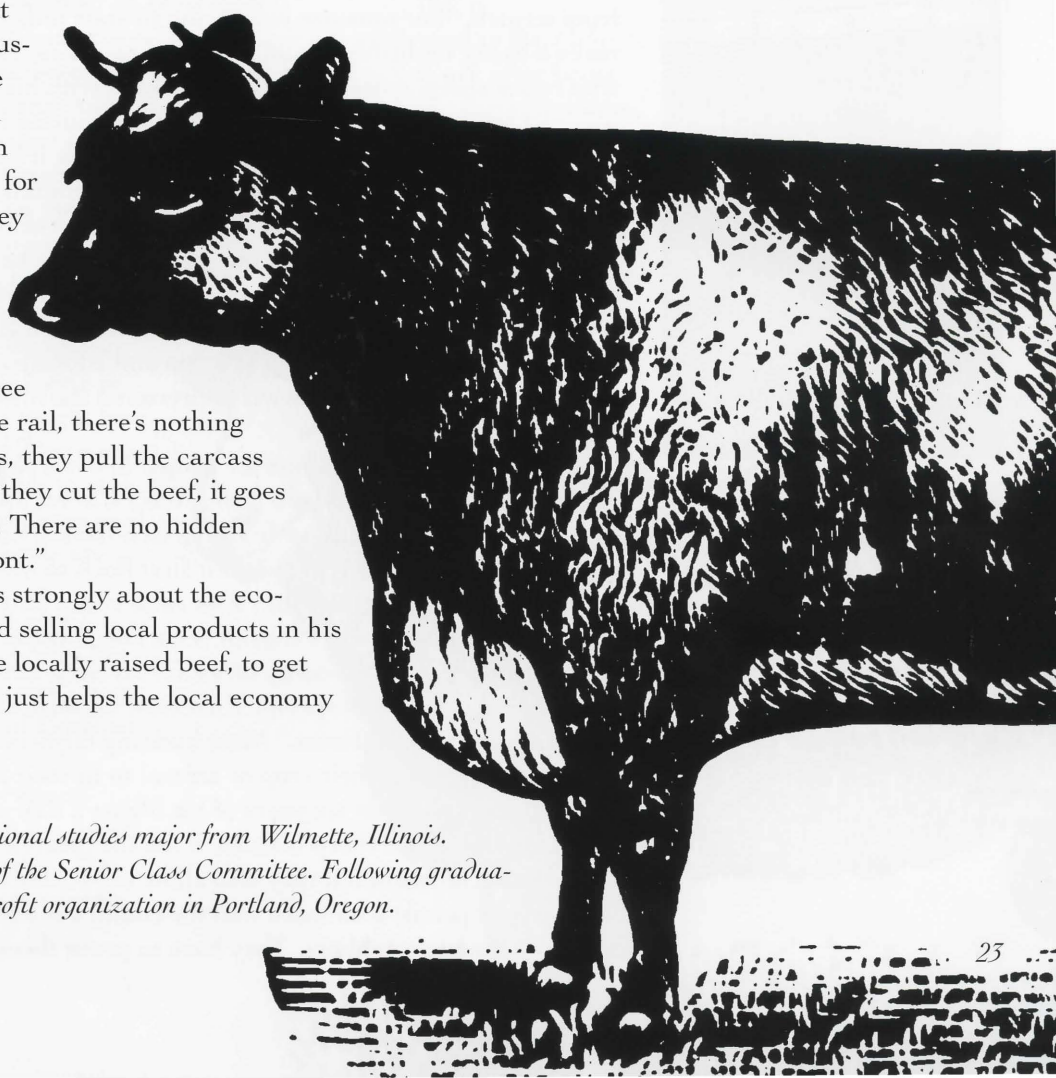
Sam Gilardi and his brother Steve run Lanning's in Mount Vernon. Lanning's began as a processing company. Last year it expanded its small retail store to a much

larger one and relocated to 1033 Newark Road. "When we designed this store, we designed it for the consumer that doesn't want to go to the big store every week. You can shop at Lanning's and get everything you need on a weekly basis, from vegetables all the way through the meat, through the bread," says Gilardi.

The store's shelves are filled with Yoder's cottage cheese and sour cream, Velvet ice cream, and apples from Glen Hill Orchards. Because it is a year-round establishment, Lanning's provides a regular market for local foods, keeping dollars spent on food circulating within Knox County and Ohio. Notes Gilardi, "We're providing a place for you to go buy your meats where the circle can all be completed right here in Ohio. The grain was raised in Ohio. The cattle were fed with Ohio-raised grain. The animal was slaughtered in Ohio. It was brought to Lanning's. We processed it, we sold it to you, and all the money stays in Ohio."

Gilardi observes a recent consumer trend in the meat industry that is stimulated by disease problems overseas, such as mad cow disease and foot-and-mouth disease. "I think it's comforting for local customers to know that they can go to a local meat market and buy beef that is locally raised, and it's been well accepted. My customers like to know when they walk in, they see the carcass there hanging on the rail, there's nothing funny about it. The meat cutters, they pull the carcass off the rail, they break it down, they cut the beef, it goes in the case, and then you buy it. There are no hidden tricks here. Everything's out front."

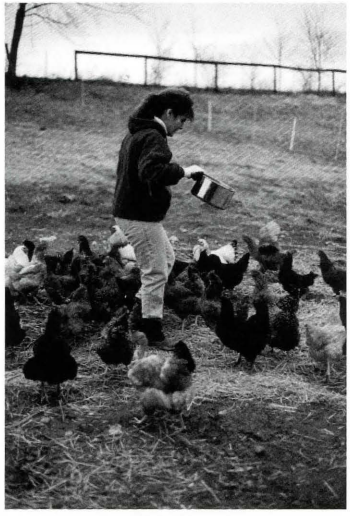
In addition, Gilardi feels strongly about the economic importance of buying and selling local products in his store: "We're helping to promote locally raised beef, to get back to the way it used to be. It just helps the local economy more if we're buying local."



Leah Sokolofski is a senior international studies major from Wilmette, Illinois. At Kenyon she serves as a member of the Senior Class Committee. Following graduation, Leah plans to work for a nonprofit organization in Portland, Oregon.

NEW FARMERS

City folk on the farm



Kate Helt feeding her chickens on the Dharma Farm. Photo by Elena Rue

With the emergence of the global food market, family farms in the Midwestern United States are dwindling as corporate mega-farms take their place. Young adults who grew up on farms are choosing to pursue jobs elsewhere because of the unstable prospects of their family farms.

Daunting economic circumstances also prevent many people from starting from scratch. "For someone just trying to start today, it's essentially not possible to make a living exclusively from farming," says Eric Helt, a new resident in the area who raises sheep, cows, goats, and chickens with his wife, Kate Helt.

Despite these odds, some people are coming into Knox County to try farming. According to Eric, "Everybody who's doing it has a special story." There is a great deal of diversity in their personal backgrounds, reasons for farming, and what they produce. The Helts see farming as a way to change their lifestyle to bring it in line with their values. "Part of our goal in moving here was to simplify our lives and get away from the mass consumerism and materialism of the city life," says Kate.

Arthur and Margaret Bolduc retired to the area from Massachusetts and began raising organic vegetables as a fun and educational hobby. Arthur, who grew up in a farming community, always appreciated the lifestyle and had farming in mind for his retirement.

Although it is common for people to move to the area in search of peace and quiet, not everyone intends to farm. Mary Carver and her husband Gene moved to Knox County to get away from the city, having no intention of raising the sheep they do today. They purchased their first flock to keep the grass down; later they expanded the number, and they now raise sheep for meat as well as for wool.

Many new farmers consult with Troy Cooper at the Ohio State University Extension—Knox County office for farming advice. Cooper notes, "We try not to encourage in any specific direction, because everyone is so different and their resources are different." Most budding farmers begin with something small and gradually adapt their crop or animal to fit their interests and resources. Bruce Rickard spent the first six years of his life on a dairy farm, but he and his wife Lisa have chosen to raise sheep because it fits the lifestyle they were looking for. Sheep require a lot of work, but they also allow the Rickards to relax and enjoy life.

New people who move into the country often generate a fair amount of suspicion among neighbors. They have to prove themselves before established

farmers accept them. "You've got to kind of get your hands dirty," says Eric Helt. He feels that new farmers need to establish themselves and get some experience before they can relate to one another. Despite this barrier, established farmers are generally very accommodating. "They have been open, friendly, and helpful," says Kate Helt of everyone they have contacted for assistance.

Chuck Dudgeon has been farming here his entire life and has seen many people come and go. "Any time someone brings something new, we're all interested, but we all have a lot of caution. He has to prove it to us before we all accept it."

Bruce and Lisa Rickard are trying "intensive grazing" with their sheep. This technique, first used by European cattle farmers, involves grazing sheep on a small area of land for a couple of days (until they eat all the grass), then moving them to another patch every two to three days. Although it forces the Rickards to put more work into fencing, this unique idea works well on their farm.

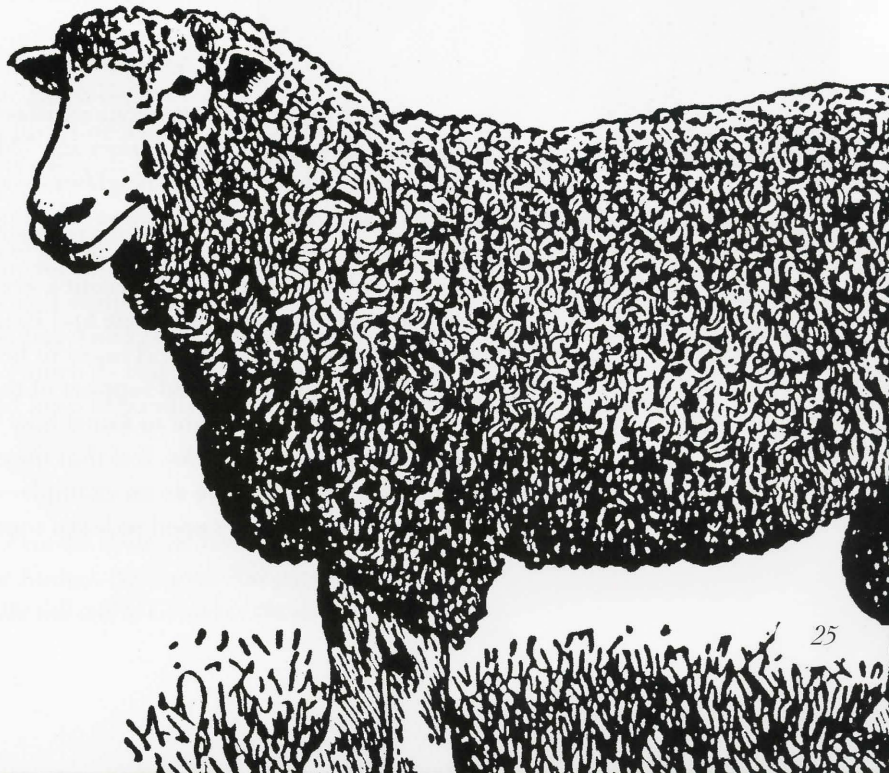
The struggles and problems that new farmers face are as diverse as their lifestyles. Mary Carver's biggest challenge is bringing her fields back to use after being inoperative for fifty years. Keith and Anita Leaning, who have a bison farm, feel that balancing time between his full-time job, their bison operation, and their family is the most difficult thing. "That's the biggest challenge," said Anita Leaning. "You can't have your own business at home and be able to drop everything all of a sudden and go play with the kids. You almost have to set aside time."

Farmers hoping to profit from their operation are faced with intimidating economics. Most beginning farmers are either retiring from a career or coping by maintaining a secondary income. Eric Helt's recent reentry into agriculture has taught him that the desire to keep a farming lifestyle is the only thing that motivates people to stay with it: "I don't think the average American has any idea the heroic efforts people are making to remain in farming."

Those who farm as a hobby are less concerned with the economics and can focus on other aspects of the practice. Judy Sacks, who raises sheep outside of Gambier along with her husband Howard Sacks, feels that farming is a wonderful educational tool: "Every year I feel like I'm developing ten years' worth of knowledge. The amount of knowledge that goes into doing things well inspires me."

I don't think the average American has any idea the heroic efforts people are making to remain in farming.

—Eric Helt



There is also a tremendous satisfaction that comes from pleasing customers in the local community. Sacks comments, "My number one benefit is probably the satisfaction of being able to feed my neighbors well." Although Sacks has a small following for her lamb sales, she feels that those who buy her meat are extremely pleased with the product and with the knowledge that it is raised with care.

New farmers not only benefit a great deal from the local community but also have a lot to offer. Although Kate and Eric Helt have come into farming after other careers, they are energetic and eager to help. "We hope some of what we bring is new energy, new enthusiasm, and support of the local farmers. We're very supportive of everyone we meet and want to know how we can contribute and how we can help." Others, such as Judy Sacks, feel that they can serve as role models for others to follow in their footsteps: "I serve as an example—even though I am far along in my professional career, it's always good to learn something new and reinvent oneself."

From Britain to bison

Keith Leaning grew up in England, and his fascination with bison began in his youth while watching a television program on bison. He continued to read about bison and was inspired by Ted Turner, the founder of the National Bison Association.

When Leaning came to the United States, he joined the association and learned as much as possible from books. He and his wife, Anita Leaning, who grew up outside of Chillicothe, Ohio, moved to Knox County when Keith got a job at Owens Corning. They moved to their farm on Hopewell Road in 1996 and bought their first bison in 1997. Anita comments, "We decided that 'if we're going to do it, let's just do it,' and we threw all of our money in at that point." She was surprised at how quickly their operation got started and how it grew.

They began by selling bison meat wholesale to restaurants, which was a very successful start. Eventually they began selling on the local retail market to enable Anita Leaning to be home with their children. Today they have about three dozen bison and retail their largest portion to local consumers. Although retail is their largest output, they still provide bison meat for restaurants, including the Kenyon Inn.

The Leanings have a large family, and sometimes they find it challenging to juggle everything at once. Keith begins work on the farm when he gets home from his full-time job. Often this is a stress release, but sometimes it is difficult for him to fit in everything on his schedule.

Since they started, the Leanings have been gradually expanding their family operation. Their love for the animals and the lifestyle is obvious in their enthusiasm and aspirations. Plans for the future are unclear at the moment, but Anita is confident that their operation will continue to grow: "We will expand as much as this place allows us, and for all I know we may decide to buy another farm and keep expanding. That wouldn't surprise me at all. He is just nuts about buffalo."

Keith and Anita Leaning with their bison, at home near Gambier. Photo by Elena Rue

Elena Rue is a sophomore anthropology major from Decorah, Iowa. At Kenyon, she is involved in Circle K and REEL (Resource and Energy-Efficient Living). Next year, Rue plans to go the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University in the fall and to Ghana in the spring.

FOOD MARKETS

Grocery shopping: more than just food

Supermarkets today cater to convenience. They not only provide a full range of food products, but they also carry household products, health and beauty items, greeting cards, alcohol and cigarettes, office supplies, magazines, and more. Some stores even have dry-cleaning, florists, videos, banks, or pharmacies. One-stop shopping, with the idea being: the faster, the better.

Grocery shopping wasn't always about speed. There was a time when going to the market meant more than buying supplies; it meant connecting with friends at a regular time and place. In Mount Vernon, from 1914 to 1957, this meant Pitkin's Market. Located on the corner of Gambier and Main Streets in downtown Mount Vernon, Pitkin's Market was more than a grocery store. In *History of Knox County, Ohio, 1876-1976*, author Frederick Lorey writes, "It was Pitkin's corner, and it became a principal meeting place for the farm people of the county, as well as for their city brothers. There were no benches or other encumbrances. People stood and talked, or leaned against parked cars and talked. It was the spot where news of crops, weather, and families was exchanged."

When Pitkin's opened, groceries carried mostly dry and bulk goods, which the grocer would retrieve for the customer from behind the counter. As prepackaged goods began to gain popularity, the grocer remained a liaison between customers and goods. Stores also began to incorporate foodstuffs that previously required trips to separate bakeries, delis, or butchers. Eventually markets became self-serve, and contact with the grocer became mostly a cash transaction.

Pitkin's evolved with the changing grocery trends. In 1922, only eight years after it opened, the store tripled in size. In 1951, the store remodeled and modernized. Both customer preferences and competition from other stores prompted these changes. In 1941, Kroger—which first came to Mount Vernon in 1924—established Knox County's first self-service, cash supermarket with all the extra services grocery stores were beginning to offer. Convenience was becoming more and more essential to the shopping experience. The personal relationships that used to be such a part of going to market were losing ground.

Despite efforts to remain abreast of consumer preferences and long-standing importance in the community, Pitkin's closed in 1957. Since then, multiple smaller markets have given way to a few bigger supermarkets. Kroger has continued to grow, eventually moving to its current location on Coshocton Avenue. Big Bear, Kroger's local competitor, came

to Knox County in the early 1960s. "Certainly shopping is easier than it was a century ago. The selection of merchandise is vastly greater, and fruit and vegetable counters are as well supplied in January as in June, but some of the county's older residents occasionally experience a sense of loss when they remember business places as they were years ago," writes Lorey.

Grocery stores continue to follow the trend toward expansion. Kroger is currently building a new store (which will be 20,000 square feet bigger), just down the road, where Big Bear operated before moving to its current location in 1993. The store will continue to have a bakery, a deli, a seafood counter, a florist, and a Ticketmaster. New additions include a lunch counter and a pharmacy.

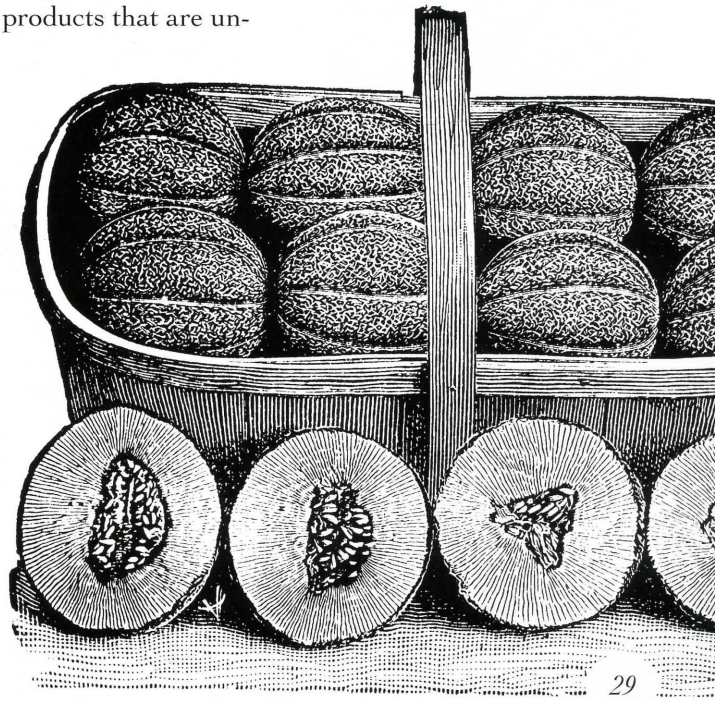
In keeping with the demand for increasingly faster service, four of the thirteen to fifteen checkout lanes at Kroger will be "U-Scans," which enable customers to scan and pay for their groceries without going through a cashier. A customer will be able to enter and exit the store without having to interact with a single person. Many people prefer a supermarket with the most modern amenities and the quickest and easiest access to as many goods and services as possible. Others, however, can be overwhelmed by this modernization.

While big businesses cater to the majority of the Knox County market, smaller and more specialized markets still have their niche. There are several smaller grocery stores scattered around the county that often are more conveniently located than the larger stores in Mount Vernon. Specialty stores also may offer products that are unavailable at a typical grocery.

For the past twenty-two years, Down to Earth Natural Foods has been one of Mount Vernon's health-food stores. Beginning as a supplement store, the store has grown over the past four years and now stocks a reasonable amount of natural and organic foods. "People wanted foods that the local grocery stores weren't providing," says Elaine Hartley, a Down to Earth Natural Foods employee of fifteen years.

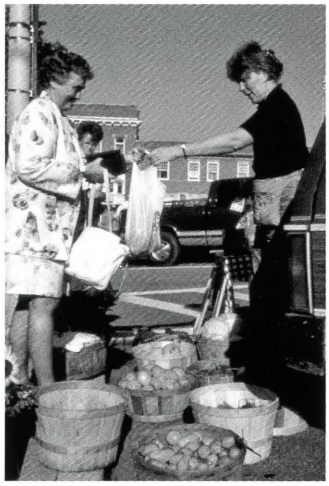
Despite its previous success, there are no guarantees. Hartley has heard rumors of a larger health-food section in the new Kroger and is concerned about the effect on Down to Earth's business: "I feel strongly about small stores that have wonderful, friendly, personal relationships. I'm hoping that this big store won't become a threat to the little store." She has had the pleasure of maintaining relationships with customers since she began working at the store. Hartley comments, "I've seen children grow up in the store, and I've been privileged to observe people make changes for better health."

Taste of Country Bulk Foods in Fredericktown adds



another unique shopping opportunity to the community. The store opened just last fall. Co-owner Regina White describes it as "a place where hopefully people can come and buy bulk foods cheaper than prepackaged foods like at a regular grocery store. We try to keep our prices as low as we can." White and her partner, Elaine Morrison, are succeeding. One customer told them that she saves around ten dollars a week buying her lunch meats and cheeses there. The store also offers dry goods and prepared foods, in addition to the deli products.

White also senses a desire for less processed and more natural products. She finds that local foods, particularly meats, satisfy this inclination. The store sells lamb from a local farm and beef from White's farm. Bruce and Lisa Rickard "sold their meat at the farmers' market in Mount Vernon, and they got a lot of response from that, because there aren't any antibiotics. There are no chemicals in the feed; they do all natural grazing," says White. With regard to her own beef, she says, "We know what goes into those cattle. We know that there's not a bunch of chemicals and all that in it, and we know that it's good, safe meat."



A vendor at the Mount Vernon farmers' market displays her produce. Photo by Pat Petzel

This desire for local foods creates additional alternative markets. A weekly farmers' market began last summer on the Public Square in Mount Vernon. "I think there was just a demand for locally grown produce. You go to the grocery store to buy it, and it's expensive. And you don't know where it came from; it's shipped in. And this way, it's all from Knox County," says White.

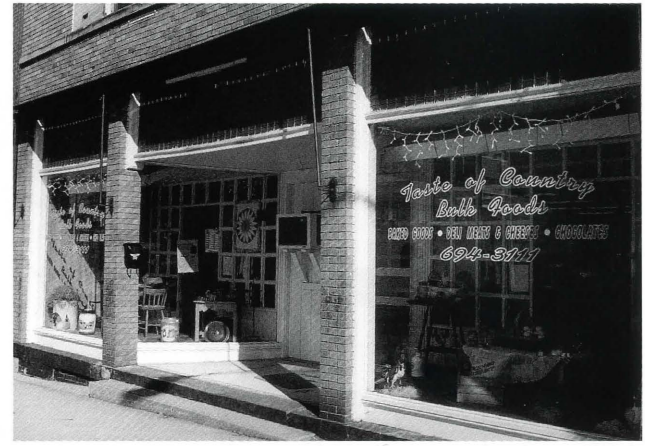
The farmers' market also satisfies more than just a preference for local food: "The farmers' market has been just wonderful. It's the whole thing; it's the socializing and getting the good food and helping support the farmers. It's all of that," says Hartley. The interactions between and amongst farmers and consumers connect neighbors to one another and to the community as a whole. People also have a deeper connection to the food they eat when they know where it comes from and when they can form a relationship with the people who grow it.

Although the desire for convenience and speed has resulted in supermarkets where less human contact is necessary, some venues still provide the personal relationships that are reminiscent of the market experience. Smaller stores carve a place for themselves through their ability to work with their customers and accommodate their needs in a way that bigger stores cannot. Old values still exist; personal relationships and quality of food sometimes take priority over how quickly it can be obtained.

A taste of success

When I ask Regina White what prompted her and her partner, Elaine Morrison, to open Taste of Country Bulk Foods, she laughs. Morrison answers for her and says, "It was just something that Gina wanted to do." As bulk-food store customers themselves, White and Morrison thought a demand for one existed in Fredericktown. This was a much more convenient locale than Holmes County, where consumers often went prior to the opening.

White and Morrison are truly dedicated to their business. "We basically just used money that we had. We're working to pay off any big debt—you know, we're not taking a penny out for ourselves yet. We're waiting until everything's paid off, and then we'll start taking a paycheck. That way we don't have to have our prices as high," says White. Affordability is a crucial part of their vision for the store: "We hope that we're saving people money."



Taste of Country Bulk Foods in Fredericktown. Photo by Erin K. Molnar

Forming relationships with customers is also an important part of the character of their business. When setting up the store, deciding what to stock was one of the hardest things for them. "We spent a lot of time deciding what to order for the store, because we knew what we liked, but we [had to] figure out what everybody else liked," recalls White.

White and Morrison enlisted the help of family and friends to get an initial idea of what to order. Since then, they have continued to listen to their customers, consistently adding more products as the demand arises. Customers "will come in and ask if we can get this or that. We're always getting in new items, and it's what people request," White comments.

"We're probably going to need more shelving and more cooler space. When we first got [our meat and cheese deli case], we didn't know how we were going to fill it, and now we're running out of room," says White. White and Morrison also plan to sell homegrown produce this coming summer—from their own gardens. White's bulk-food store dream is proving to be a successful reality. But it's more than just a business; it's their way of being part of and giving back to the community. And it's a source of personal satisfaction: "You know, it's a learning experience, too. We've learned so much."

Erin Molnar is a senior anthropology major from Cleveland, Ohio. After graduation, Molnar plans to pursue a career in social work involving sexual violence and domestic abuse.

PRESERVING

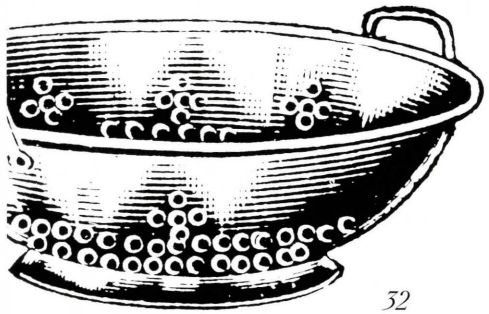
Preserving a lost art

Today, due to easy accessibility of foods, the most exotic vegetables and fruits are now readily available. Kate Brown, owner of the maple syrup farm Bonhomie Acres, remembers a time when particular foods were not familiar: "I was an adult before I knew a mango was a fruit, because we always called green peppers mangoes. I was in Florida and tasted one, and it was like silk."

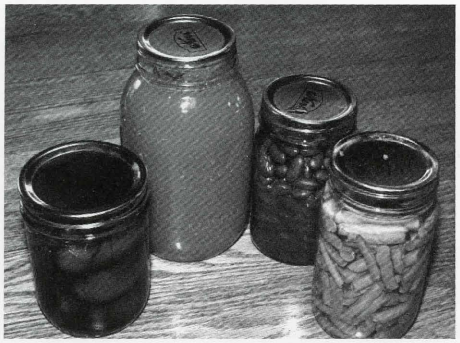
It is no longer necessary to grow one's own food, and even less so to preserve vegetables, fruits, and meats. The result is that food-preserving traditions fade as supermarkets stretch the seasonality and availability of many foods. Because of time, initial expense, and potential spoilage, that basement pitted under the house full of canned goods no longer exists in many homes. The Mason jars containing green beans and diced tomatoes have been emptied and not replaced. Gardens are becoming more rare.

Since fewer people preserve food through canning, freezing, and drying, many are increasingly unaware of the origins of their food. Marcia Brown, a Fredericktown schoolteacher, has found in her second-grade class that "they think home cooking is to go to Hometown Buffet, because they've got the word 'home' in it. They don't realize how it is to have quality food." And local resident Mary Bebout of Utica, whose husband is a fireman in Columbus, says of his coworkers that they "don't have a clue that somebody has to grow" the food.

Some people are taking steps to encourage others to learn about their food. Marcia Brown brings a dehydrator into her classroom during Thanksgiving celebrations. She says with a laugh that at first "they bark about 'Ew, I don't want to taste that,' but once they are part of the process and they see, 'Wow, this is good,' I never have any dried fruit left to take home." Yauncey and Juanita Newman, Howard residents, invite Kenyon students to their land to pick apples and make cider. They tease that the students are often impressed that cider is not created in the store.



Those who continue to preserve can everything from tomatoes to green beans to beef. Preservers often decide to freeze based on taste preference, although the rising electricity prices make some people, such as Juanita Newman, can more. Beef, fruits, and vegetables can also be dried. The Ohio State University Extension agent in Knox County, Ella Mae Bard, cautions that, out of the three preserving methods, drying is the most severe with regard to vitamin loss. She explains that, because drying can take 12 to 24 hours, "Drying is only for the ones who are truly dedicated."



Once processed, goods from the garden maintain both an edible and an aesthetic appeal throughout the winter. Photo by Elena Rue

There are several reasons why people are determined to preserve, even though it is no longer an expected component of maintaining a household. Money is saved when the food comes directly from the garden. Preserving also becomes much more than the actual product because gardening itself can be therapeutic. Juanita Newman says, "I really like to plant potatoes because I like to dig them. And you go down in that dirt and lift it up and there are all of those potatoes. I just get so excited."

As well as health benefits from working in the garden, there are advantages to home preserving. In extending the produce into the fall and winter, one has control over the amount of preservatives and pesticides placed on the plants. Home processing minimizes nutritional loss potentially found in commercially canned goods. Newman purposefully leaves the skins on her vegetables to maintain an optimum vitamin level.

Canning and preserving also bring a sense of self-sufficiency. "I can make chili just out of the basement. That's kind of fun to do. Maybe that's my pioneering spirit," says Kate Brown. The Newmans have found that they only go to the market for bread and milk—and Juanita often makes her own bread. Marcia Brown is unable to find commercially made green beans or corn that her family will eat.

While some people can to eat, others also include aesthetic considerations. Juanita Newman says, "If you do peaches, you do the seed side of the peaches outside so you can see it because it's pretty; it has a little reddish color to it and then the peachy color of the flesh." Shawn Dailey of Mount Vernon has a glass hutch in his kitchen, and he notes, "I can carrots in part just because I like the way they look."

Even so, because of the time, initial costs, and potential difficulties, fewer people preserve. "When I think of green beans, I may work all day and have 21 quarts of green beans but, good land, I could probably go to the store and buy the same amount for five dollars," says Kate Brown. With both adults often working outside of the home, Dailey says, "when you get busy, it is the

first thing to go." Newman recalls, "So many nights, we'd be up canning and shelling produce until three o'clock in the morning, and then you get up and go to work anyway." One solution is to get the whole family involved. Marcia Brown's family works together to grind and purée the tomatoes. "I made it into family fun so that we could spend time together, even though it was drudgery for me to do by myself," comments Brown.

Even when time can be managed, the initial expense in purchasing a pressure canner and jars may discourage people. Bard says, "You are not going to be able to buy, at full market price, fresh produce, buy all the equipment, and spend all your time, and beat the prices they can do when they can do it en masse." Garage sales offer the equipment at an affordable price.

When everything has been purchased, time has been freed up, and the directions have been followed, spoilage may still occur. "I think probably the most nerve-wracking part of it is to be sure that everything is sterile so that you don't have spoilage or take the chance of poisoning yourself," says Newman. Marcia Brown remembers, "One time the pickles were like sponges. You could bend them and they still wouldn't crack." There are more serious—and potentially fatal—dangers, such as from the growth of botulism, an enzyme. Dailey recalls stories of women found dead in their kitchen, a pot of green beans boiling on the stove and half the green bean they sampled too early in their hand. Both the OSU Extension agents and the *Ball Blue Book* serve as great guides on how to preserve. The extension's website is http://ohioline.ag.ohio-state.edu.

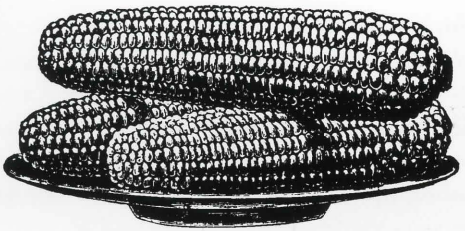
Kate Brown, Fredericktown, lifts up a packed jar of tomato sauce from a pressure canner on her stove. Brown processes everything from corn to tomatoes to beef. Photo by Elena Rue

Preserving continues to play a role, even if more minor than in the past, in the dynamics of Knox County. Marcia Brown believes that "You are an ethnic group here: middle American farmer type thing. We do things differently. We have our own rituals, our own customs." Above all, through gardening and preserving, one becomes aware that there is more to food than that fluorescent glow and the wide, squeaky floors of the supermarket. As Dailey says, "You get an appreciation for where your food comes from. Whereas for most Americans, food comes from the grocery store, not the farmer who is out in the fields growing it."

Family corn freezing

Bill and Kate Brown, owners of Bonhomie Acres, a maple syrup farm, hold an annual corn-freezing day that brings together their extended family. According to Kate, "You can make as big a mess with corn if you do a dozen ears or if you do twelve dozen ears," so they freeze over one hundred pints of corn in an afternoon.

Two sons and one daughter join forces at the farm. They gather the corn in



a pickup truck. Kate says, "We husk it and we have an open fire with a big kettle—well actually, it's a tub—and my husband Bill, he does all the cooking." They blanch three dozen ears at a time in a wire basket. The blanching process, by stopping enzyme growth, turns the corn to a bright, Crayola yellow. To prevent overcooking, the corn is run through ice water for an equal length of time and stripped on the picnic table. The ears are then covered with tablecloths because, as daughter-in-law Marcia Brown explains, "it's apt to be such a sticky day when we do this the flies are everywhere."

In getting her four children ready to pick corn and freeze, Marcia says that her kids growl, "'Ew, we have to husk all the corn,' but yet they're right there doing it. A farm family is a good community." When the kids are really little, they have particular tasks like tearing the twist ties off of the bags. Marcia remarks, "If they dropped [the ties] on the ground, who cares, they could get dirty." The little children also play gofer for Bill Brown and run to the kitchen to grab him a Pepsi when he feels parched. Of course, when the little kids husk the corn, "the adults have to redo it once they do it. But they want to be involved, and we don't shun them," Marcia comments.

Afterwards, they relax and eat together, tired. Marcia Brown brings her camera every year to take pictures, "but we are all so busy and involved and … up to our elbows in corn, and I don't." During the winter, the memories will return. Marcia explains, "It's wonderful to know that it's homegrown and I know what's in that bag. Just the other day I cooked some and there was some extra hair in it and my husband said, 'Ah, Neil, you must have husked this ear of corn.'"

Lisa Groesz is a senior psychology major from Corvallis, Oregon. Meta-analytic research she conducted this summer will be published in International Journal of Eating Disorders. *Following graduation, Groesz hopes to work in western Africa as a Peace Corps volunteer.*

THE HUNGRY

Feeding the soul

We must eat to live. This is one fact we cannot escape. However, food also plays a deep and symbolic role in celebration, cultural tradition, and gatherings with friends and family. The simplicity of a good meal transcends the frills of modern life and feeds the soul. Those who go hungry can attest to this.

For outsiders to Knox County, it can be easy to romanticize the rolling cornfields and picturesque farmhouses into an idyllic fable of rural life, one that excludes poverty. In my own hometown of Oakland, California, the problem of hunger is a very clear and physical reality. In rural Knox County, the signs of poverty and hunger are not visible on the street corner but remain hidden—smoothed over by the habit of placing everyone into a large and undifferentiated "middle class."

It surprises many community members that there are people going hungry in Knox County. There are 2,200 families receiving food stamps in the county. Even more surprising to many area residents is that there is a growing homeless population in Knox County. The Department of Human Services measured the number at 396 in 1999, having grown from 161 in 1995. This figure is an estimated low, only representing those individuals who visited their department for assistance.

How a community deals with the pressing issue of hunger says a lot about their integrity, and capacity to come together to make positive changes. A beautiful example of this integrity is Interchurch Social Services. Interchurch is an emergency service organization whose resources include a food bank, financial assistance, counseling, emergency overnight housing, clothing, and other material commodities. The executive director of Interchurch, Jolene Stulka, explains, "It began in 1968, with a shop of food in a Sunday school classroom. It was unique for its time. We've been able to grow and open the branches in the rural settings to make our resources accessible to the people."

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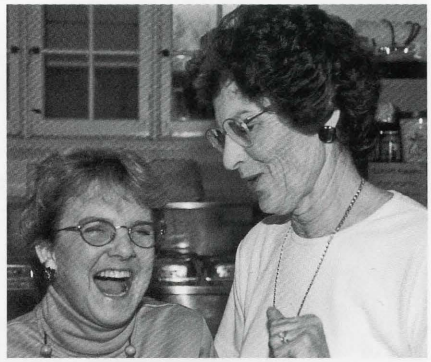
—Jolene Stulka

Responding to the need, Interchurch now has three sister branches in Danville, Centerburg, and Fredericktown. Families are eligible to pick up food supplies once a month, receiving enough food for three meals a day for three to five days. "It's a sizable package," says Lisa Mazzari of the Danville branch (which covers some Appalachian areas), "and we do our best to include items like rolled oats that will make the food stretch." Interchurch exists as an "emergency service," which means they cannot provide groceries for an entire month, but they help boost families out of a financial pinch.

Interchurch depends on community support to keep the pantries full. The Knox County Food for the Hungry drive stocks all the locations of Interchurch and Salvation Army for as long as they can make it last. These efforts are supplemented by small food drives, local church efforts, and individual donations to keep the food moving through the doors of Interchurch and into the homes of those in need. In the year 2000, the four branches of Interchurch provided 3,229 families with food packages.

When asked if the pantries ever run out of food, Mazzari notes that "the Lord moves in mysterious ways, because when we're in dire straits, things just seem to work out." Dorothy Thompson, the other coordinator at the Danville branch, says, "Just a month ago we had a family donate a whole cow and had it butchered into hamburger. Then Kroger unexpectedly donated 1,000 lbs. of chicken." Mazzari emphasizes that "since late fall, that's really been our security blanket."

As I walk behind Sandy Daubenspeck, the director of the Mount Vernon Interchurch, she shows me with bubbling enthusiasm the room stacked high with cans and other nonperishables. With regard to the food supply, she declares with determination, "My motto is move it in, move it out, because God will not replenish if we hoard and save it." As we walk back through the kitchen, I watch a local women's group drop off a load of food and volunteers package up bags of food. I feel inspired knowing that all this energy and the bags of food are going straight back into the community.



Jan Watson (left) and Marilyn Weil (right), the coordinators of the Hot Meal Program at the First Presbyterian Church in Mount Vernon, share a laugh in the kitchen. Photo by Karla Tibbetts

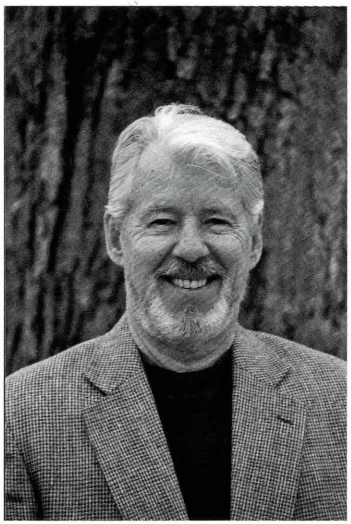
With one hundred volunteers a month, Interchurch contributes to community spirit. Each branch works with a small budget, taking whatever assistance comes their way, helping to empower individuals to make changes in their lives. Jennifer Smetana, director of the Fredericktown branch, reflects that it is "a rewarding experience to see harmful cycles that were established be broken."

Sue Neighbarger, the director of the Mount Vernon Salvation Army, makes clear in referring to Knox County's social service organizations that "we're all here for the same reason." They network and refer hungry individuals as necessary to other organizations that distribute resources. The Salvation Army is supported entirely through financial donations. They provide numerous services, among them a food bank. Individuals are eligible every three months for food; they can receive a package with enough food supplies to last a week. Individuals can use the Salvation Army as an additional resource to the Interchurch food bank.

A fairly recent addition to the effort to combat hunger in Knox County is the Hot Meal Program in Mount Vernon. Established by Bob Hudson, the program has been up and running since April 30, 2000. Six churches and the Salvation Army have taken on the responsibility of purchasing, preparing, and serving the food. The churches offer a safe place where free hot meals are served by smiling faces, with no questions asked. People eat casually gathered around tables, sharing news and telling tales.

There is a spirited crowd of all ages at the Central Church of Christ, which serves on Wednesdays. On one night there is a large group of ninety-two, including some members of the church. Sarah Wood, who prepares the whole meal, explains that "their only problem had been transportation to the church." After everyone has been served, we sit together with full stomachs and take it all in: the sounds of the children playing, the soft hum of happiness, and the gossip. I have some hearty laughs this night, and I realize by the sign of my ear-to-ear smile that my soul has been enriched. It must be the spirit of community, coming together over the warmth of a good meal.

Community action



Bob Hudson founded Mount Vernon's Hot Meal Program, which serves free hot meals at a different church every night of the week. Photo by Karla Tibbetts

Bob Hudson was driving back from Columbus, Indiana, when an idea was born. He had been visiting an old friend involved with a community soup kitchen, and he began to wonder whether people were going hungry in Mount Vernon. "There's no sense in starting something if there isn't a need," says Hudson. With this in mind, he decided to see exactly what kind of a need there was and what he could do about it.

After a stop at the library, and further investigation with Interchurch Social Services and the Salvation Army, Hudson found out there were indeed many people suffering from food shortages as they tried to make ends meet. With the strong belief that "food always brings people together," Hudson envisioned a place where people in need could receive a free hot meal and feel the warmth of community.

With enthusiastic cooperation from several local churches, Hudson established the Hot Meal Program. The individual churches "really are the backbone of the whole program," says Hudson. Last year, on April 30, the Salvation Army served the first hot meal of the program, which has evolved into a hot meal served at a different church every night of the week. The Veterans Benefit Foundation also pitches in with $200 a month. Hudson has stayed active with the program, regularly picking up day-old bread and pastries from Lanning's and Neff's markets, and he visits during the meals nearly every night of the week.

The Hot Meal Program established by Hudson is a powerful reminder that it is people who make things happen and that the health of the community depends on individuals taking initiative. Hudson, originally from Albertson, Montana, has been an active community member since he retired from the Air Force in 1974. He also established the Walk of Honor in Mount Vernon's Public Square in 1998, commemorating all veterans of Knox County. Hudson also runs a "pick-your-own" orchard from June through August on Glen Road in Mount Vernon.

Karla Tibbetts is a senior American studies major from Oakland, California. Following graduation, Tibbetts plans to work on an organic farm in Martha's Vineyard and then will pursue the fields of art and education in Colorado.

EATING OUT

Oh the places you'll...eat

At lunchtime on any given Monday, members of the Kiwanis Club sit at round tables in the Alcove Restaurant and Lounge in Mount Vernon. They enjoy conversation and good food as they wait for their meeting to begin. Members scarf down a final bite as President Dave Pressler calls the meeting to order.

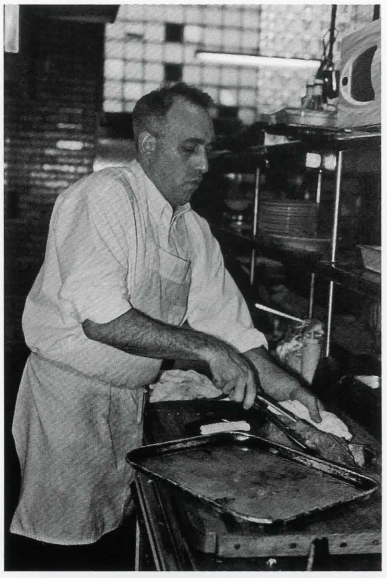
Just down the street, the smell of food permeates the walls of the High Street Restaurant. Two friends, who these days rarely get a chance to see each other for longer than their half-hour lunch break, sit down to a meal in the same booth that they have sat in for the last fifteen years. They eat their food and catch up with each other. Walk through downtown Mount Vernon and you will see a variety of people doing the same thing: eating out.

Restaurants have a function beyond serving a busy culture with little time to cook for itself. "For someone like myself, I get to see other folks and talk, so it certainly serves a social purpose," says Pressler. Particularly in small towns, restaurants are not an excuse to avoid cooking so much as they are a place for social interaction. It is a well-known adage that we are what we eat, but perhaps it is equally true to say that we are where we eat, and with whom we eat. Restaurants have long been a mecca of social activity in Knox County. With the dwindling availability of free time, they are especially important as places where people integrate socializing with their breakfast, lunch, or dinnertime. "It serves a purpose, because we need to eat, but at the same time we can socialize," remarks Pressler.

Although restaurants are still very important to the community, their function has changed over the past fifty years as much of the business activity has shifted out of the downtown area. Yet restaurants survived the metamorphosis, and many of the restaurants that were here years ago still exist today.

"There was a lot of business in the '50s and '60s. Almost all the business was done downtown. And now there's not much at all. It has become more offices," says David Body. Fifty years ago, the Alcove was known throughout the state and would regularly serve customers from Columbus and Cleveland. "A lot of people would stop on their way, and this was the place to eat. It was quite famous. They would do, oh, six hundred people a night, which is a lot," Body adds.

Today, offices predominate downtown, and the bustling social scene past is over. Instead of serving shoppers, restaurants commonly draw people on a lunch break or at a business meeting. Body is the chair of the Economic Restructuring Committee at Heritage Center, which is currently initiating a "Main Street"



David Body prepares a dish in the kitchen of the Alcove Restaurant and Lounge. Photo by Elena Rue

approach to revitalizing the downtown area. Eating establishments will play a key role in the rejuvenation of the downtown area.

As the Coshocton Road juggernaut continues to grow, downtown restaurants experience more competition, but owners remain confident they will endure. "The east end has hurt the small businessman, because of all the fast foods. A lot of people will go out there and shop, and they'll stop and eat. So it has hurt. We have taken a crunch in that. But I think with our reputation and everything, people will come back," says Jody Wilson, owner of Jody's Restaurant in Mount Vernon.

People continue to eat out downtown, despite the fact that there is less activity. Good food has a tendency to bring people together. Local restaurants have endured by providing a place where people can step out of their busy lives to eat and talk with friends.

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—Jody Wilson

Eating establishments also provide a sense of community in the rapidly expanding town. "I have a lot of repeat customers that may come not planning to meet someone, but expecting to see someone. At lunch there is also a lot of business done in here of people just coming in, and they'll see someone and say, 'Oh, by the way I needed to speak to you,'" says Body.

In addition to casual encounters, many formalized business meetings go on inside restaurants. All of Mount Vernon's service groups meet at local eating establishments: Body estimates that Rotary has been meeting at the Alcove for over fifty years. A food-oriented meeting allows the service groups, as well as other businesses, to eat a good meal before their meeting. This also gives them time to socialize before they get down to business. This may be the only social interaction that someone working alone sees all day.

Restaurants are also often a backdrop for a traditional meeting of friends. "There are certainly tables where the same people sit next to each other week after week after week. If one of them died, I think they'd bring their corpse and set it there! It's a chance to sit down and talk," says Pressler. Some of these groups of friends have dined together every week for over thirty years, and most of them have traditions and rituals that are unique to their group. These range from a particular table that they sit at to a specific time that they meet.

One of the oldest eating traditions in Mount Vernon is the after-church meal each Sunday. "After the 11:30 service, that's kind of primetime eating time," says Pastor John Fullerton of the First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon. Eating out after church has roots in celebrating the Sabbath as a day of rest, which many Christians celebrate by spending time with family and friends. This gradually evolved into specific rituals where certain restaurants expect the same group week after week. "I've seen them on the phone in the back of the church saying, 'Hey, he preached too long. We're running a little late, but we're on our way,'" says Fullerton jokingly. He also jokes about considerations the church took when they decided to move their service back fifteen minutes: "That fifteen-minute window had implications, because there was a certain amount of, 'We've got to beat the Methodists to the restaurant.'"

Traditions such as this show that our local restaurants are more than just places to consume food. They are living examples of Mount Vernon history and places where community survives. In our fast-paced society, where even eating has become "efficient," there are still plenty of places where people are not too busy to sit down and share a good meal with an old friend.

A farm gal's cookin'

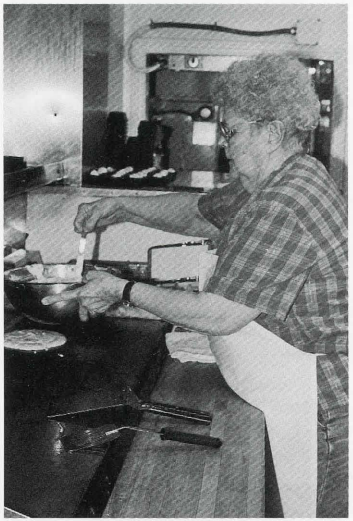
On a late Sunday morning, the lobby is packed. A diverse crowd of people spills out the door, flooding the sidewalk. A visitor to the town would think they were giving away money inside the small building, but locals realize that it is just a typical Sunday at Jody's Restaurant.

"What I want to give to the community is good home cooking," says Jody Wilson, owner of Jody's Restaurant in downtown Mount Vernon.

Wilson, born and raised in Mansfield, worked in the restaurant business at Mazza's in Mount Vernon before purchasing Jody's in 1976. "I just asked him one day, 'What do you want for this?' and he quoted a price and I said, 'I'll get back to you.' Went home and asked my husband, 'You want to buy a restaurant?' And here we are, twenty-five years later." Wilson always wanted to own a restaurant so that she could take advantage of her home cooking and pastries.

"I think that the family restaurant and homemade cooking have a lot to do with the community. I mean, not to downgrade fast food, but people get tired of that. They want good home cooking. And I'm a farm gal, and I know how to cook." Wilson's home cooking draws people from all over the state, and even some from outside of Ohio. Besides the excellent food that patrons receive at Jody's, many people come back time and time again because of Wilson and the friendly atmosphere. She has been active in the community as president of the Kidney Foundation and as a member of the Cancer Society and the Elks Club. Wilson has also helped out with Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Brownies, and Cubs, and she has won the Golden Deeds Award for the outstanding citizen of the year. She knows most patrons not only by face but also by name.

"I have this thing about names. I can remember. Now I don't know how long that memory's going to last," jokes Wilson. All of her patrons are like family to her and receive a proper welcome and goodbye. "I'm a hugger. I get lots of hugs," she says. Jody's is more than a restaurant. It is a community where people come to see friends, family, and, most of all, Jody Wilson.



Jody Wilson inside Jody's Restaurant, which she owns and manages. Photo by Karla Tibbetts

Chris Meyers is a junior sociology major at Kenyon from Amherst, Massachusetts. At Kenyon, Meyers sings in the Cornerstones and Stairwells and is active in the Christian community. He plans to spend this summer in Berkeley, California, working in public relations and playing music.

RITUAL FOODS

The ties that bind

Michael Cooper, Director of Hillel, baking challah for the Sabbath dinner. Photo by Sarah Schwenk

At special times, food can become a symbol of faith by creating bonds between strangers and connecting the present day to the distant past. Although the meaning may vary from group to group, ritual foods provide the ties that bind us together.

For many members of the Knox County community, Sunday dinner may be the most obvious example of how food can truly be much more than meets the … mouth. Pastor John Fullerton, from the Mount Vernon First Presbyterian Church, points out that there is a "cultural desire to come together, at the table, after church on Sunday" and eat as a family. Sunday is a day for rest and eating and, as Fullerton says, a "rejuvenation" of the body and spirit.

A Sunday dinner with the whole family emphasizes how food can become spiritually charged, surpassing its basic nutritional value. Breaking bread with family and friends reminds us not only of the joy these people bring into our lives but also of unity and fellowship. Through food, many people around Knox County are constantly forming and reaffirming "fellowships of family and fellowships of faith," as Fullerton explains.

Although Christian rituals may be the most common example of ritual foods in Knox County, there are other people who find culinary enlightenment in different religious or ethnic events. For members of the Jewish community, food is an integral part of their daily observance. Although there are numerous Jewish dietary rituals, keeping kosher and the observance of Passover are two of the most important examples.

The dietary laws comprising kosher are "symbolic and metaphysical," writes Maurie Sacks, author of "Metabolizing Judaism" in *Digest* (a publication dedicated to understanding foodways). Michael Cooper, director of Kenyon College's Jewish organization Hillel, explains that keeping kosher, although not strictly reserved for food, means maintaining proper or ritually fit behavior.

To keep kosher, one must eat only "animals that have a cloven hoof and chew their cud. When it comes to fish, it's animals that have scales and fins," says Cooper. A kosher diet also prohibits "boiling a kid in its mother's milk." To follow this, a person keeping kosher would not eat dairy and meat at the same time (such as a cheeseburger), or use the same utensils or dishes for both.

The Passover ritual is a wonderful example of how food becomes a connection

between the distant past and the present. "The Passover meal is very elaborate. There are symbolic ritual foods that stand for the events commemorating the Exodus from Egypt, because that's what made the Jewish people the Jewish people," says Cooper.

One of the most telling examples of this symbolism is the presence of a green vegetable and a bowl of saltwater. "The greens are for spring, because Passover's a spring holiday. The saltwater represents the bitter tears that the slaves suffered," explains Cooper. Another example shared by Cooper is matzo (pronounced "matza"), a flat, unleavened bread. "Matzo is called the bread of affliction to remember how, in haste, our ancestors had to leave Egypt and couldn't wait for their cakes to rise." By eating matzo, Jewish people pay their respects to the historical struggles of their people.

They use...food to remember the past and reinforce their bonds of family and community.

Symbolically charged foods are not limited to religion. Many ethnic groups, including African-American and Asian-American Knox Countians, have rituals that serve to remind them of their connection to something more powerful that extends beyond the bounds of Knox County.

Ric Sheffield, a life-long resident of Knox County and prominent member of the African-American community, explains how his family rituals and ethnic rituals are one and the same. A vivid memory from Sheffield's childhood is of chitterlings ("chitlins"), a dish made of cooked hog intestines. The process of cooking chitlins is tedious, and Sheffield remembers the dish only as a celebratory New Year's treat. Chitlins originated among African-Americans during the days of slavery, when the masters would give the most "undesirable" parts of the animals to the slaves as food.

Growing up in Knox County, Sheffield recalls, "If someone was eating chitlins, I knew it wasn't at the local high school cafeteria." To Sheffield, chitlins are associated with special gatherings of family and community. Chitlins are a food reserved not only for the coming together of friends and family within the African-American community in Knox County but also throughout the United States. They use this food to remember the past and reinforce their bonds of family and community.

According to Jean Wang, owner of Hunan Garden in Mount Vernon, many common Chinese foods help to connect people around the world to Chinese traditions. One food that breaches the distance of time is a dish called *zongzi*, which is made of sweet rice wrapped in reed leaves. The legend says that *zongzi* "was thrown into the river to save Qu Yuan, a widely admired poet and politician, from being eaten by the fish after he lost confidence in the government and drowned himself. People eat *zongzi* as a way of remembering this great figure in Chinese history," explains Jianhua Bai, Wang's husband.

Another traditional food is Chinese dumplings, or *yuanboa*. This dish originated many years ago during an emperor's tour of China. Although it was customary to give a gift to the emperor upon his visit, one poor woman could not afford the traditional gift of gold or silver pieces. To compensate, she made little dumplings of dough, meat, and vegetables in the shape of the traditional monetary gifts. According to Bai and Wang, "The emperor liked the gift and was very moved. Thus the food became one of the popular festive foods" for Chinese people.

Although we are all residents of Knox County, foods can be a reminder of our diversity and at the same time our similarity. Because there are many ways in which people use food to connect themselves to something larger—community and family, past and present—ritual foods become the ties that bind.

Creating space

Imagine moving to a country far from home, where it is nearly impossible to find any of the foods that are most familiar. What would you do? For Jean Wang, owner of Hunan Garden in Mount Vernon, the answer was simple: open a restaurant. In 1991, Wang and her husband, Jianhua Bai, moved to Mount Vernon from their hometown one hour south of Beijing, China. Brought to Mount Vernon for Bai's professorship at Kenyon College, Wang was unsure of what the future held for her.

Owner Jean Wang at her restaurant, Hunan Garden, in Mount Vernon. Photo by Sarah Schwenk

Arriving in Mount Vernon and realizing that there was "no authentic Chinese food" in the area and that her limited English skills were problematic on the job market, Wang contacted friends who had experience in the restaurant business. With their help on everything from friendly advice to recipes, Wang was on her way. She was still in need of a space for her restaurant, and the newly built shopping plaza on Coshocton Road was in need of tenants. This match was completed, and Hunan Garden was born.

The final step was figuring out the food. Wang had already collected recipes from her friends and family, but she still needed to find the foods to turn her dream into reality. When looking for a supplier for her foodstuffs, the most obvious choice was to buy locally. "All the foods and ingredients are provided by nearby merchants. The vegetables come from Lanning's of Mount Vernon, the meat and rice comes from Gordon Foods of Mansfield, and most of the Chinese stuff comes from Columbus," explains Wang. In creating a space that brings China closer, then, she starts with the food products to be found virtually in our own backyards.

Although her restaurant is a huge success, there are still some difficulties for Wang: "The most challenging thing for me has been, and still is, communicating with my customers and people I need to work with for my business. It is not an easy task to understand each other, both linguistically and culturally." This difficulty, although frustrating, is generally not a problem, says Wang, because most people are patient and understanding.

By moving halfway around the world and starting a restaurant from scratch, Wang has created her own unique space where a little piece of China can be found right here in Knox County.

Sarah Schwenk is a senior anthropology major from Ann Arbor, Michigan. At Kenyon, she serves as an advisor for survivors of sexual violence. Last year, she spent a semester at the University of Queensland, Australia. After graduation, she hopes to pursue a dual degree in law and social work.

COOKING

The joys of home cooking

With parents working outside the home and an increase in children's extracurricular activities, families struggle to find the time to prepare and gather for a family meal. As a result, many meals consist of prepackaged dinners or take-out. Mount Vernon resident Ethel Garver expresses concern about health risks: "Let everybody make it from scratch and learn how to cook. It's easy just to open up that box. That's loaded with preservatives, and that's not good for us."

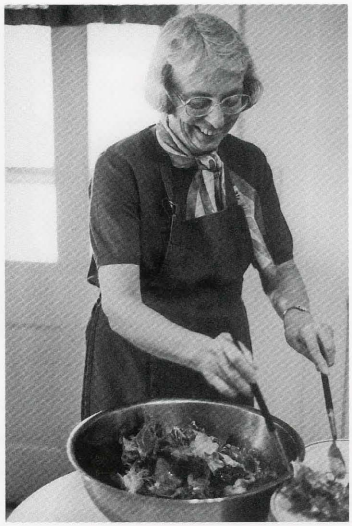
For many Knox County residents, coming together over a home-cooked meal is an important event in their family lives. Mount Vernon resident Sally Carhart explains, "We always sat down and shared the day's events, talked over whatever was to be talked over." Garver still invites her children and grandchildren over for dinner on Sundays: "That's really what families should do. A lot of families just don't know one another because they don't even sit down to a good meal every day, and that's a shame. That's where I think our country's getting in trouble."

The preparation of the meal also is important, and individuals learn to cook in many ways. Some learn from their parents, experimenting at early ages, while others learn later in life by trial and error. Other methods include formal cooking classes, observing chefs on television, and home economics classes.

Kenyon College drama professor Thomas Turgeon grew up in a family that revolved around food. His mother, Charlotte, studied cooking in Paris. She then wrote or edited forty to fifty cookbooks, collaborating with famous chefs such as Martha Stewart and Julia Child.

Turgeon expresses that his favorite part of cooking is the improvisation: "I enjoy the idea that I've got some stuff and I've now learned what some techniques are. The fun of applying the techniques to whatever's lying on the table and coming up with something is a very gratifying and inventive thing to do, when it works. You have lots of disasters along the way, but that's part of it."

His wife, Peggy Turgeon, runs a catering business for the college and the Friday Luncheon Cafe in Gambier with partner Joyce Klein. Peggy says, "I like to work with tangible things, and I like working with my hands. I like to bake especially. I also enjoy serving food to people and having it be appreciated; I enjoy



Joyce Klein of Gambier serves salad to eager patrons at the Friday Luncheon Cafe. The cafe provides Kenyon students and townspeople with delicious food in a friendly atmosphere. Photo by Elena Rue

the audience." Klein enjoys "the smells and what you end up with. You know, it's fun putting together things and having it come out. It's a little bit like [being] a chemist or an artist."

Garver's favorite part is the finished product: "You start with several different things, and then you put this all together, and out comes this beautiful cake or these beautiful cookies. That's a good feeling."

Recipes can be a source of individual pride, and the culinary section of the Knox County Fair gives people a chance to show off their baking talents. The competition includes four age divisions, as well as a "bake it with lard" section. There are almost one hundred items that individuals from the adult and golden divisions can enter, including cakes, breads, rolls, pies, and candies. Awards include ribbons for individual categories, Best of Show in each age division, and an overall grand champion. Home economics teachers serve as judges.

Mary Schlairet is co-coordinator for the arts and crafts division of the fair. She explains, "People have specialties. There are some people who tend to bake more pies, [while others] tend to make a lot of the breads. And there are some people that do it all. I think some [enter] to be able to say to their friends, 'I've gotten a first place in this,' and some probably just do it for fun."

Some of the important qualities in judging entries include the expected ones, of taste and texture, but aesthetics—such as color and uniformity—also are important. As Garver puts it, "The looks go a long way. If you have an attractive article, it's going to look good before [the judge] tastes it."

Schlairet reports that the number of entries has been down in recent years. Garver, one of the winners, expresses concern about the decreasing numbers of young people learning to cook and bake today: "I was really glad to see this [one] young girl get a start. I said, 'I am so tickled that you entered, because there just aren't too many young folks getting into it.'"

Even experienced cooks find recipe-swapping a great way to increase one's culinary repertoire. As Garver says, "I love to give my recipes out. It's a good feeling to share with others. [We] senior citizens, we're always swapping recipes." Peggy Turgeon notes that when she uses someone else's recipe, she is reminded of that person; it gives that person a kind of immortality.

So many people approached Turgeon and Klein for recipes that they decided to put together a recipe book with Joyce Acton, former owner of the White Oak Inn. They still use many of these recipes at the Friday Luncheon Cafe.

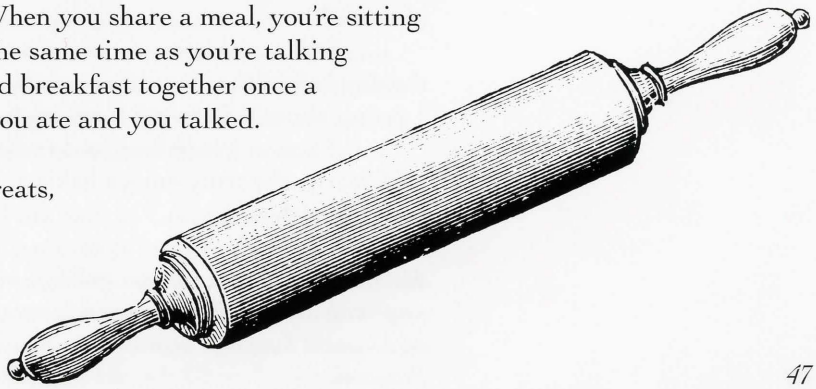
Often, community groups compile a recipe book. Usually their primary motivation is fundraising. However, these books can serve to share the history and strengthen the community spirit of these groups.

Recently, Earl and Ruby Hochstetler, a couple from Danville's Amish community, have produced a cookbook called *Plain and Simple Cooking*. In addition to the recipes collected from their Amish neighbors, the book contains a brief history of all sixty-four Amish families.

Many churches also create recipe books. Sharon Derr explains that her parish, Saint Vincent de Paul Catholic Church of Mount Vernon, has added a recipe section to their parish photo directory. Carhart, a parishioner of the First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon, says that the Presbyterian Women (church group) wrote a cookbook in 1987: "It was a fundraiser to fulfill a pledge that we make each year to give so much money to the mission program of the Presbyterian Church USA." The book also contains a bit of the parish's history by citing excerpts from an earlier edition published in 1913. Carhart explains that the book shared a bit about the community because, "In the past we have had potlucks here, and many of the recipes are the dishes that would be prepared to bring to the church. I think [the parishioners] really were very enthusiastic to share their favorite recipes."

Potlucks are an extension of the family meal, with a wider sense of community. Churches and clubs hold potluck suppers, and at family reunions everyone brings a dish. Mary Schlairet explains that these events are important "because of the fellowship and the getting together, the community. When you share a meal, you're sitting down and you're communing. You're eating at the same time as you're talking and visiting. At school in Fredericktown, we had breakfast together once a month, and it was wonderful. You just sat and you ate and you talked. It helps you pull together as a unit."

From simple, hearty meals to gourmet treats, home cooking is clearly an important part of Knox County's family and community life.



Baking up a storm

While visiting Ethel Garver, I enjoyed a pleasant conversation over a cup of tea and savored one of Garver's scrumptious desserts, a freshly baked chocolate meringue pie. I also noticed a quilt adorning her wall, displaying ten colorful prize ribbons.

For the past ten years, Garver has been entering the culinary section of the Knox County Fair, winning the distinction for Best of Show in the Golden Class (age sixty and over) every single year. She also used to compete in the Bellville Fair and the Fredericktown Tomato Show.

"I'm a competitor," says Garver. "I love to compete. And that's a little bit in my blood, I think, because my father showed hogs at the Ohio State Fair for fifty-two years, and he won a lot of times."

The first time she won, Garver was so excited that she went home and cried. "I think every year, 'No I won't get it this year,' but then I do. I'm proud of it really, because it's quite an accomplishment. And it's a great feeling to win. Now, I always say I go to win."

Garver's passion for baking emerged at the age of five. "That was my first cake. I couldn't read the recipe, but my mother read the recipe off and I put it together." She first learned by observing her mother: "I always wanted to learn, and I was from a large family. I'm one of twelve, so Mom let us go ahead and do things because she knew we couldn't destroy it so much that we couldn't eat it. And that was to my advantage to have a mother like that, that she'd let me go ahead."

Just listening to Garver list off the things she enters for competition is enough to make your mouth water. She usually takes twenty-two entries, including different rolls, cakes, breads, cookies, candies, and pies.

This means that Garver must start her preparation far in advance. "You have to stretch it out, or there's no way you can get it done." She explains that cookies and rolls can be baked ahead of time, frozen, and thawed the day before the show. "The freezer really helps when it comes to showing. It saves a lot of time, a lot of work."

Still, some items require last-minute preparation. While she makes her cakes the day before the show, Garver says, "I don't bake my pies until early that morning. I get up about 4:30 to get them cooled down in time to get them in there at noon."

"You've got to love to do whatever you're doing in order to be a success at it." Clearly, she truly enjoys baking, and her hard work, dedication, and skill have been rewarded.

Ethel Garver of Mount Vernon displays her Best of Show ribbons from the culinary section of the Knox County Fair. Photo by Elena Rue

Molly McNamara is a senior sociology major from Rochester, New York. At Kenyon, she sings with the Cornerstones and volunteers at local elementary schools. Next year she will be an assistant language instructor in Japan, working with the Ohio Saitama English Teaching Program.

FOOD AND HEALING

The powers of food

Food is a basic yet necessary ingredient for human survival; it is a building block for life. The commonly used phrase "You are what you eat" should scare a vast majority of people today because of the staggering lack of nutrition in an average American's daily diet. So often, convenience overrules the importance of food.

Yet when a health concern arises, people often turn to the food they eat. Elaine Hartley, who works at Down to Earth Natural Foods in Mount Vernon, believes that "food is the foundation to our health." Whether through traditional doctors or alternative methods, people are becoming more aware of the powers of food.

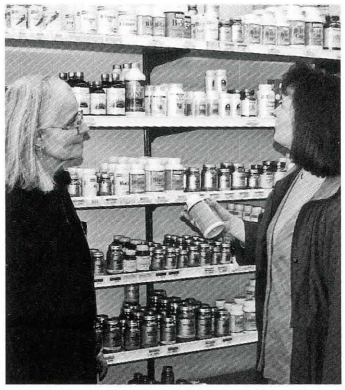
In Knox County, there are numerous groups and resources that focus on the importance of food in daily life. People use a myriad of ways to heal their bodies, one avenue being through nutrition. Everything from traditional doctors to massage therapy is available in this county, and people mix and match these techniques to find the solutions that fit their needs. People often choose alternative methods because to do so allows them the freedom to be proactive about their health. In some cases, "People that don't have health care and don't have access to health care have to do alternatives, because it is cheaper," says Pam Leonard, a Mount Vernon resident.

Oftentimes, people do not consider the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle until presented with a health issue. Lisa Rickard, a sheep farmer near Fredericktown, completely changed her diet when she discovered she had type II diabetes last March. Being frustrated with the solutions that she was given from her doctor, she decided to take the healing process into her own hands.

Dale Glass, a member of the Seventh-day Adventist community in Mount Vernon, cannot take any medicine to help relieve the pain he suffers from arthritis because he had cancer of the esophagus. "The only thing I had to do for my arthritis was get off dairy products. It was something in the milk; I don't know what it was, but it worked," remarks Glass.

Traditional doctors, such as Dr. Sandra Pinkham of Columbus, who works with many individuals from Knox County, treat patients primarily through diet changes. She also has the ability to prescribe drugs when necessary. Enos Yoder, an Amish healer who practices foot reflexology, concerns himself with the basics of a healthy diet and the use of supplements.

Twenty years ago, Yoder started Yoder Natural Health Care, located near



Elaine Hartley (left) helps a customer at Down to Earth Natural Foods, in Mount Vernon. Photo by Luette Frost

Amity. He uses foot reflexology to pinpoint the problems. "When it hurts in the foot, you know what organ is not working right," explains Yoder. He then treats the pain by placing his hands on the feet to transmit his healing powers. He also gives natural products and suggests diet changes to help in the recovery. He believes that people's "lifestyles [have] a lot to do with their health."

While many people make diet changes in accordance with their specific health concerns, others believe that good nutrition is essential to good health. The Seventh-day Adventist community of Knox County promotes a healthy lifestyle in order to reduce overall suffering. They believe that, according to the book of Genesis, God wants humans to follow a specific vegetarian diet. Ron Vozar, interim manager of the Adventist Book Center and Quality Health Food Store in Mount Vernon and a Seventh-day Adventist, says, "Less than half the church are full-time vegetarians." There is a general concern for leading a healthy life, of which the diet is a very important aspect. "What our concern is in general, not only as a church but also individually, is that we change not because we have health problems but to prevent health problems," says Vozar.

Glass, who has been a Seventh-day Adventist for about twenty-five years, has recently become concerned with promoting ways to prevent sickness. "I had so much sickness myself and watched my family members die prematurely. I don't want you to get sick," says Glass. He has recently been dedicated to educating people on the importance of eating a balanced diet and learning techniques to take care of the body. "Prevention is the name of the game," says Glass. "I like to start with young people so they can learn it when they are young, not like I did."

Many people are concerned that the American diet contains too many processed foods. With all this convenience food, "the bodies don't have time to adjust," says Rickard. "I am coming to the idea that the best thing is the least processed." Many others are coming to the same conclusions. Along with the need to return to whole foods, there is an accompanying lifestyle change that includes the ability to choose the foods you eat.

Yoder feels that "America is going fast pace." There are benefits "in slowing down the pace, growing your own food, and being more aware of what you take into your body." We have moved away from being self-sufficient, and with this change has come an ignorance of the basics. We must "work for a living instead of working for money and then trying to live," says Yoder

Bev Actis, a resident of Mount Vernon, has always been conscious of the food she eats. But when her son, Eric Bisenius, went through kidney failure in March of 1998 and he developed Guillain-Barre syndrome as a result of a hepatitis B vaccine, she began to pay greater attention. Actis and her son work with traditional doctors and various alternative methods as well as follow a healthier diet. Actis notes, "I truly believe that your body knows how to heal itself, given the right environment and the right intake of things."

Actis believes the "ingredients are simple: fresh air and sunshine, good fresh water, good whole, unprocessed foods that are not contaminated with additives and pesticides, exercise, rest, and a good attitude towards healing." Throughout her time caring for her son, Actis realizes that food is a basis for healing.

Oftentimes, a change in lifestyle is necessary when coping with or trying to prevent

specific health concerns. Some would argue that it is a time constraint, but Actis says, "It took more time, because I had to develop new menus and recipes, but what I did was just really simplify the way I cook. The end result is that I am really spending less time cooking than I was before."

Whether you are searching for answers to health problems or simply desire a healthier lifestyle, remember that the food you eat will always affect your physical and mental well-being. Actis comments, "There are lots of wonderful things on the horizon, noninvasive therapies that are exciting to see, but food will always be a basic; food will always be a foundation therapy."

Making changes

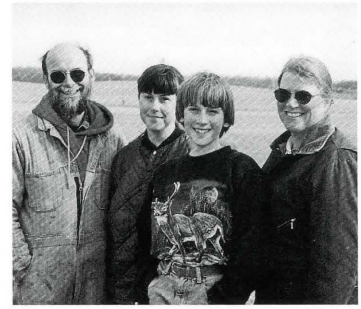
When Bruce and Lisa Rickard and their family moved from Pennsylvania to Knox County, they began making changes in their lifestyle. When the corporate business world of New Jersey was no longer satisfying, they decided to fulfill Bruce Rickard's childhood dream of being a farmer. "We were making lots of money, but we didn't have any time," says Lisa Rickard. In October 1987, the Rickards came to Ohio and began raising sheep. In fall 1994, they moved to their present farm near Fredericktown with their two children, Jesse and Hannah.

With the move to farming, the Rickard family began to change their eating habits. "We had to really cut back on our expenses, and that affected our menu," says Lisa. In Pennsylvania, "we used to eat like everybody, fast food when it was convenient, restaurants once in a while, spaghetti for dinner, you know, whatever." In Ohio, "we ate out less, much less, but of course it was still spaghetti and salads and hamburgers."

In March 2000, Lisa Rickard found out that her blood sugar was too high and that she had type II diabetes. She measures her own blood sugar daily with a glucose meter. Instead of taking medication to lower her blood sugar, she researched possibilities and began a low-carbohydrate diet.

After further research, the entire family began the new diet that April. Bruce Rickard and the kids are on the diet as well, because they know it will help Lisa Rickard stay on it. Bruce says, "It's healthier for all of us. This diet has no deficiencies in it, because we can get everything we need, and we have the time to do the home processing that it takes to make this diet work."

The entire family has become more aware of their health in connection to their eating habits. Along with these diet changes, they are getting better exercise and generally feeling stronger. They grow most of their own food and find satisfaction in taking responsibility for their own health. The Rickards worked together as a family to make significant diet changes in order to treat Lisa's diabetes.

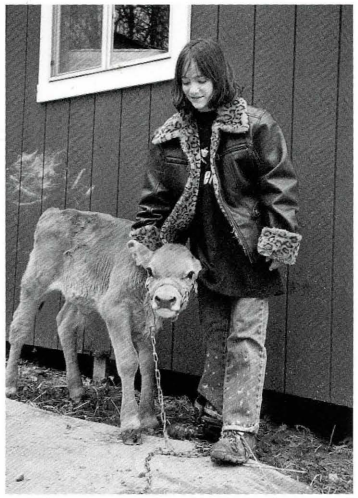


Bruce, Hannah, Jesse, and Lisa Rickard (from left to right), standing in their sheep field, on their farm near Fredericktown. Photo by Luette Frost

Luette Frost is a senior international studies major from Washington, D.C. At Kenyon, Frost is a manager of the Horn Gallery of the Arts. Following graduation, Frost hopes to pursue a career focused on Third World development in Latin America.

FOOD CHOICES

What's for dinner?



Helena Alberts's granddaughter, Carla Black, helps raise Chocolate the cow. Photo by Audra Ransburg

Most of us eat three meals a day, never stopping to consider why we eat the foods we do. Even with beef scares in Europe and *E. coli* outbreaks here at home, many of us don't think twice about grabbing a burger for lunch. If it's quick and cheap—we take it. A growing number of consumers are considering health factors, as well as environmental concerns, when making food choices. But what other considerations influence our food choices?

Helena Alberts feeds five to ten family members every day at her home near Apple Valley; it just depends on who shows up for dinner. For Alberts, shopping economically is something of a sport. With two deep freezers in her home, she is able to make the most of a sale: "I always buy in quantities when stuff's on sale. If something's not on sale, I don't buy it—especially if it's meat." She buys cheese by the fourteen-pound block, twenty loaves of bread at a time, and ten half-gallons of milk when the price is right.

Most recently, she has been getting her beef by the cow. A dairy operation in the area birthed a Jersey bull that they didn't need. "They were going to just let it die, starve to death. We got that one for free, just the time to go out and get it." Helena's son, Ralph, says, "We're going to raise it and butcher it when it gets bigger."

Alberts also grows her own produce in the summer months, with the help of her grandchildren. She says, "You know your vegetables are fresh when you do it yourself." What the family doesn't eat, they can for later in the year. The kids prefer to eat fruits and vegetables they grow themselves rather than store bought. They find a comfort and pride in growing their own food.

What children want to eat and what they actually will eat are primary considerations for many parents when choosing foods. One afternoon at a local supermarket, a grocery shopper from Mount Vernon tells me, "I have kids, and I want them to eat healthy. But, I've got to work with them a little bit. I buy things I think my family might eat, because there's no sense getting stuff they won't that just sits there."

Another woman is particularly aware of accommodating to the likes and dislikes of young people: Nancy Bevan is in charge of lunches for all of the Mount Vernon schoolchildren. She insists that "what it boils down to—you could put a beautiful menu in front of these kids and if they don't want to eat it, they're not going

to eat it. A lot of it goes right back to what Mom makes for them at home. Most kids are creatures of habit, and they like their comfort food." Balancing what kids want to eat with what they should eat is Bevan's job. She makes school lunches conform to USDA guidelines. Bevan jokes, "I was in food service when Ronald Reagan was around, and ketchup was considered a vegetable. For good nutrition, that's just going to take some time."

Trends are shifting from convenience to health, and it is affecting what kids will eat. According to Bevan, the key is to start talking about nutrition with children when they are young. Her philosophy is to "start with the little kids, when they're in kindergarten, and keep working on them." Maybe by the time they are seniors they will have good nutritional eating habits.

Margo de Camp, mother of four, has similar feelings: "It's extremely important to feed them very healthy when they're young. Then when they get older, they've got that foundation that I think is really, really important in all aspects of their physical health." De Camp teaches by example to help her children understand the importance of good nutrition. Keeping a garden and raising her own chickens, de Camp instills some awareness in her children's minds about the food they eat. "They see the whole cycle. They see where the food comes from. I think that's important, too."

Back at the supermarket, a Howard resident tells me that he returns home from the store with foods he knows his kids will like. He grows some of his own produce in the summer because, he says, "it tastes better, and it's fresh." Another customer, Elizabeth Roberts, feeds six at home. Her primary considerations are to buy foods that are healthy and foods that are appealing to her family, while keeping kosher dietary laws. Though food is central to all of our lives, Roberts says, "You eat to live, not live to eat." That seems to be the sentiment of many consumers.

Many people associate their food with a box on a shelf. Shoppers like Michael Ferguson of Mount Vernon make food choices based upon price and convenience. Ferguson says, "I try to find things I can cook fast and easy." Gloria Troy, another shopper from Mount Vernon, buys foods for convenience and looks for items on sale. However, Troy is willing to sacrifice convenience for quality and uses fresh foods when she can. As with Troy, some consumers see quality as a trade-off to convenience.

Even with all of these considerations and thoughts going into our food choices, most of us would eat whatever was put in front of us. Maybe one of our considerations should be exactly what it is we are eating. Take some time during your next meal to consider where your food comes from.

With considerations such as price and convenience dictating our food choices, we neglect to examine the potential health benefits and consequences associated with the foods we eat. One hamburger could have pieces of over a dozen different

cows in it, from up to six different countries. What is a Twinkie really made of? Are frozen vegetables and commercially canned fruit as nutritious as fresh produce? Maybe we will be able to make better decisions about what to eat if we first consider what it is we are eating.

Teach your children well

Gloria Troy of Mount Vernon shops for quality fresh foods. Photo by Audra Ransburg

Margo de Camp and her family live on a small farm outside of Gambier. The driveway winds past the old pole barn and over a stream. Just beyond the rope swing sits their homestead. In their home, they practice healthy eating habits because de Camp feels it is important to give her children a foundation of good nutrition and awareness about their food while they are growing up: "I approach it from several points of view. One is just the physiological health reasons for myself and my family. We feel that we want to be healthy. And then the other reason, for myself personally, is a sort of spiritual type of thing. I'm a vegetarian."

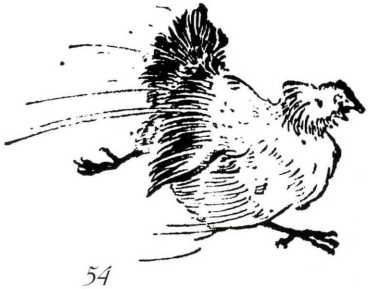
Of her four children, only Laurel and Susan are still at home. They help with garden duties and tending to the chickens. "We enjoy growing our food," de Camp tells me. It is important to her that her children understand where their food comes from—produce from the soil and eggs from the chickens. "I think the garden really ties it in. And the chickens, too."

Keeping a garden has tightened her connection to the earth as well. "I'm really into mulching in the garden. All I do is plant it and lay down the mulch, and then it becomes this great habitat. It makes this environment where I go out there and I see a little spider doing its web. Then it sees me and sort of scurries back, and I think, 'I'm an intruder in my own garden.'"

Regarding the lack of accessibility of health foods in Knox County, would it be easier to lead this lifestyle in a city? She says, "I'm just not a city person." She buys some products bulk and does go to Columbus to stock up on certain items, but her biggest concern is that she could not keep this lifestyle in the city.

There is value in her children playing outside and helping with farm chores. She enjoys the ability to keep her garden and chickens and is hoping to get some horses soon. Her children benefit from grazing in the garden for an afternoon snack of snap peas instead of opening the cupboard for a bag of chips. "For me [this lifestyle] seems to be working."

Audra Ransburg is a senior political science major from Indianapolis, Indiana. She is involved with Habitat for Humanity in Knox County. Following graduation, Ransburg will pursue a master's degree in city and regional planning.



Margo de Camp's daughter Laurel enjoys lending a hand with the chickens. Photo by Audra Ransburg

Foodways was directed by Professor Howard L. Sacks and conducted by students Luette Frost, Lisa M. Groesz, Jennifer Lawton, Molly McNamara, Christopher Meyers, Erin Molnar, Audra Ransburg, Elena Rue, Sarah Schwenk, Molly Sharp, Leah Sokolofski, and Karla Tibbetts.

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Foodways is a presentation of the Rural Life Center at Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio. The Rural Life Center promotes education, scholarship, and public projects about rural life. Through collaboration with the central Ohio community, we seek to enhance the quality of local rural life. For further information, contact Howard L. Sacks, Director, Rural Life Center, Kenyon College, Gambier, OH 43022. Telephone 740/427-5850; Fax 740/427-5815; E-mail rurallife@kenyon.edu; World Wide Web http://rurallife.kenyon.edu.

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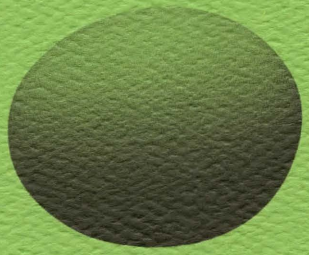
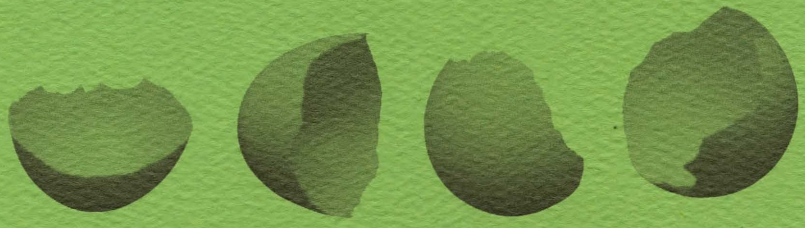




RECIPES

Osso Bucco Lamb Stew

Judy Sacks, Gambier

2-3 tablespoons olive oil
2 pounds cubed lamb
10 large garlic cloves, crushed or chopped
2 ½-3 pounds Italian (plum) tomatoes, seeded and coarsely chopped (nicer texture if done by hand than by processor)
2-3 tablespoons fresh rosemary, chopped
1-2 teaspoons salt
Black pepper to taste
½ c. water

In large kettle or pan, brown the lamb cubes in the oil, turning occasionally, about 6 minutes. Scatter garlic, tomatoes, and rosemary over the lamb and add salt, pepper, and water. (This is not a very wet stew.)

Simmer covered over moderately low heat 1 ½ hours or until tender. Taste broth occasionally to see if you want to add more rosemary and more water. Cool before chilling. Tastes best if served the next day, or even two days after cooking. Serves 6.

Alternative: Use fresh basil leaves instead of rosemary.

Fried Green Tomatoes

Katie Ball, Fredericktown

Green tomatoes
Flour
Butter
Salt
Pepper

Thinly slice tomatoes. Roll generously in flour.

Melt just enough butter to cover the bottom of the frying pan. Fry floured tomatoes in pan until they are a light brown; this should take about 5 to 7 minutes for each side.

Season to taste with salt and pepper and serve.

Wild Muskrat

Paul Hothem, Mount Vernon

1 muskrat
1 or 2 potatoes
1 onion
flour
salt
pepper
seasonings to taste

Skin and clean the animal right away, and be sure to remove the glands. Soak it overnight in salt water to remove the wild taste; then parboil for 15 to 20 minutes. You may add one or two potatoes and/or an onion for flavor. Drain and discard the potatoes and onion. Roll the meat in flour and add salt, pepper, and seasonings to taste. Place in a large pot or crockpot and, instead of spreading evenly, stack to one side to hold in the moisture.

Slow cook at medium to low heat until desired texture is reached. Depending on the size of the animal it could take anywhere from an hour to nearly a full day. A tablespoon or two of water may be added to maintain moisture during cooking.

Fresh Tomatillo Salsa

Tim Patrick, Toad Hill Farm, Danville

1 pound fresh tomatillos, husked
1/4 cup onion, diced
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 jalapeño or other hot green chilies, seeded and chopped
2 tablespoons fresh cilantro, chopped
2 teaspoons lime juice
salt

Bring a pan of water to boil. Put tomatillos into water, lower heat and simmer gently for 20 minutes. Turn them frequently so they do not split. Drain. Mix together onion, garlic, chilies, and cilantro. In blender or food processor, blend tomatillos to make a coarse purée. Add remaining ingredients and blend together. Season with salt to taste.

Allow to cool; serve. Will keep for several days in refrigerator, or if frozen it will keep for several months.

Excellent served as an appetizer with tortilla chips or serve with grilled chicken or grilled fish.

Bison Meatballs

Anita Leaning, Gambier

2 pounds ground bison burger
1/2 cup ketchup
1/4- 1/2 cup chopped fresh basil
1/4- 1/2 cup chopped onion
Salt and pepper
1 large can (28-ounce) tomato sauce
6 teaspoons brown sugar
3 teaspoons white vinegar
Salt and pepper

In a large bowl, mix bison and next four ingredients. Form into meatballs. In a large saucepan, mix tomato sauce and remaining ingredients.

Place meatballs on a broiling pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 15-20 minutes or until done. Bring sauce to a boil and add meatballs. Let simmer for 5-10 minutes.

Tofu Cheesecake

Elaine Hartley, Down to Earth Natural Foods, Mount Vernon

1 pound tofu (Mori-Nu brand recommended)
1/2 cup brown sugar
1/3 cup honey
1/4 cup oil
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1 tablespoon unbleached flour
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
A pinch of salt
8-inch graham cracker crust, unbaked

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Blend ingredients in a food processor or a blender until smooth and creamy. Pour mixture into the unbaked pie shell and bake for 45 minutes. Variation: add 1 1/2 cups cherries or blueberries.

Pesto Pizza

Shawn Dailey, Mount Vernon

2 cups lightly packed basil leaves
1/2 cup lightly packed Italian flat-leaf parsley
1 fresh clove garlic
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
1/4 cup dark-green olive oil
a pinch of coarse kosher salt
2 ripe tomatoes
2 cups mozzarella cheese
Crushed oregano
1 red onion, thinly sliced
1 pizza dough

Preheat oven to 500 degrees. Place first six ingredients in a blender and process until smooth (this creates pesto, a basil paste). Sprinkle yellow cornmeal on the pizza pan to prevent the pizza crust from sticking to the pan. Spread the pesto onto the pizza dough and layer with sliced tomatoes. Cover with mozzarella cheese—you can even add a little Parmesan. Sprinkle crushed oregano over the cheese, then layer with thinly sliced red onion. Bake in oven until cheese begins to brown—about 15-25 minutes, or follow the instructions for your pizza crust. The higher temperature helps to caramelize the onions, so keep it on the hot side.

Baked Beans for 40

Marilyn Weil, Danville

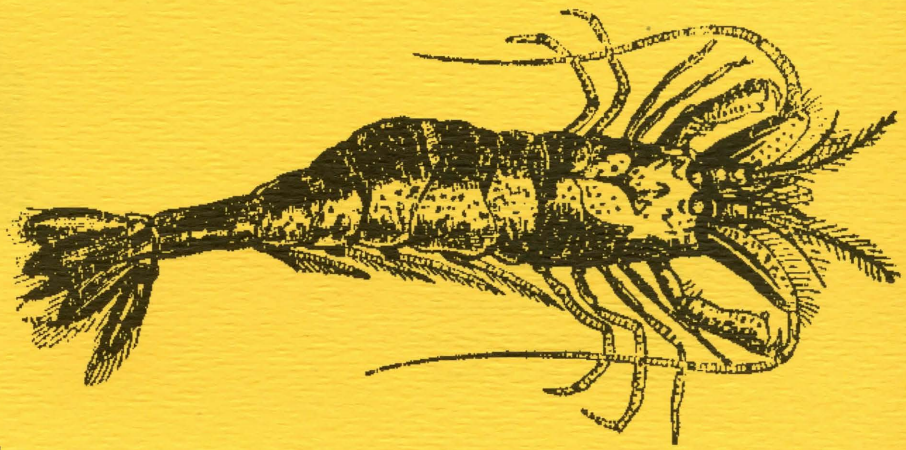
12 (8-ounce) cans of Campbell's pork and beans
2 cups brown sugar, lightly packed
2 cups catsup
3 tablespoons prepared mustard
3 small onions, chopped
2 green peppers, chopped
20 sausages or hot dogs

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine ingredients and pour into a large baking pan.

Bake covered for 1 1/2 hours. Cut up sausages (or hot dogs) and add to beans. Bake uncovered for 30 minutes.

Black Tiger Shrimp with a Cognac Prawn Sauce

David Atkinson, Mount Vernon



Sauce:
3 whole tomatoes
2 1/2 ounces olive oil
3 ounces fresh minced garlic
1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 tablespoon fresh basil
Salt and pepper to taste
2 ounces cognac

14 Jumbo Black Tiger shrimp
1 1/2 ounces sliced black olives
2 1/2 ounces sliced portabella mushrooms
1 1/4 ounces feta cheese
10 ounces angel-hair pasta
Salt and pepper to taste

Slice tomatoes in half. Place on a baking sheet skin side up. *Nappe* (lightly coat) with half the oil and garlic. Roast in broiler under high heat about 6–7 minutes, until skins become darkened. Remove skins and discard. Add tomatoes to stockpot, and add the remaining garlic, cayenne, basil, and salt and pepper to taste.

Cook tomatoes and spices on stovetop over high heat, smashing with a wire whisk until almost smooth. Add cognac and bring to a simmer (185 degrees).

Sauté the shrimp with the remaining oil in a separate pan. Add the black olives and portabella mushrooms. Add the sauce and continue to reduce until desired viscosity is achieved.

Serve over angel-hair pasta and top with feta cheese. Yields two servings.

Carmie's Challah

Uri Levine, the Levine family, and Kenyon College Hillel, Gambier

2 tablespoons and 3/4 teaspoons self-rising yeast
1 tablespoon sugar
1 1/2 cups warm water
Sprinkle yeast and sugar in water. Set aside until foamy.

3/4 cup sugar
4 eggs
1 cup oil
4 teaspoons salt
1 1/2 cups water
15-18 cups unbleached flour (have at least five pounds of flour on hand for working the dough)
1/2-1 cup raisins (optional)
1 cup sesame seeds (optional)

In large bowl blend sugar, eggs, oil, and salt. Gradually blend in water and 8-9 cups of flour. Add yeast mixture to bowl. Add raisins (if desired). Keep adding flour until the dough feels like a baby's tush. Cover bowl and place in warm spot to rise for about 1-2 hours. Braid *challah* as desired and place on greased pans. Cover and let rise for 1 hour. Beat one egg and paint *challah* evenly with it. If sesame *challah* is desired, sprinkle with seeds.

Place pan in cold oven. Turn oven to 350 degrees, and bake until golden brown. Remove from oven and pan to cool. Be sure to allow *challah* to cool completely before freezing.

Blessing for taking of *challah* (recite before ritually breaking off part of the loaf to eat): *Baruch ata adonai elohainu melech ha'olam asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hafrish challah.* Translation: Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to separate the *challah* dough.

Best-ever Cherry Pie

Ethel Garver, Mount Vernon

1 cup sugar
1/3 cup flour
3 1/2 cups frozen cherries
1 tablespoon butter
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon almond flavoring
Top and bottom piecrusts

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Mix sugar and flour together in a saucepan. Add cherries when they are thawed enough to break them apart. Add butter. Cook over medium heat until the mixture thickens. Add cinnamon and almond flavoring to cherry mixture and pour into bottom crust. Cover with top crust.

Bake at 425 degrees for 10 minutes and then at 375 degrees for 30 minutes.

Garver enters this recipe in the fair, and it has never been beaten.

Low-carb Waffles

Rickard family, Fredericktown

8 eggs
1 cup cottage cheese (4% fat)
3/4 cup wheat bran
1/4 cup soybean flour
1/2 tablespoon baking powder
1/2 tablespoon baking soda
1/4 cup softened butter
4 ounces cream cheese (softened)
1 cup water

Mix all the ingredients together. Let stand for five minutes or so, until bran absorbs the water. Add more water if necessary to get the right consistency. Pour on waffle iron thinly (will expand with cooking). Makes 8 waffles.

Meatloaf for 20

Helena Alberts, Mount Vernon

3 pounds lean ground beef
2 1/2 cups rolled oats
6 to 8 large eggs
4 large onions, chopped
1/2 box Zesta (saltine-type) crackers, crumbled
1 bottle barbecue sauce
1/8 cup water
1 clove garlic, minced
Italian seasoning
Onion salt
Pepper

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine beef, oats, eggs, onions, crackers, garlic, seasoning, water, and 2/3 bottle of barbecue sauce in large mixing bowl. Work together with hands. Divide into three or four large casserole dishes and pour the remaining barbecue sauce over them. Place on middle rack of oven and cook for 1 to 1 1/2 hours.