



Organic
Connections

MAY-JUNE 2011

The magazine of Natural Vitality

Matt Briggs

Environmental Solutionist

Sacred Headwaters

Documenting God's Country

Chef Peter Berley

The Power of Food



**NEW
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flavor!**

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organic
veggies,
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Time to Upgrade Our Mental Software

Human Thinking 1.0 (Western Edition) was overall a pretty nifty mental operating system. Testament to this is the fact that we're still here after all these years. But of course there are bugs that we can't continue to ignore. We seem to inevitably end up periodically in armed conflict and have made rather a mess of our economy, our environment and our health.

The biggest problem with the system is that, while we are all interconnected in a myriad of ways, Human Thinking 1.0 is not a networked system. It functions on the basis of *what's good for me or us* and largely ignores the resultant effects created in other areas.

Evidence of this is so pervasive that it seems almost inherent in our culture. Examples abound. Food companies profit from products high in cheap refined carbohydrates while obesity and diabetes reach epidemic proportions. Financial companies make windfall gains from tricky investment vehicles and leave the rest of the world in an economic meltdown. Chemical companies market patented industrial solutions that are later determined toxic to humans and outlawed but which persist for decades in the environment. The list goes on, but you get the point.

This brings us to the next evolution in cognition and reasoning: Human Thinking 2.0, which is currently in beta testing.

Though it's true that quite a number of people have managed to transcend the limitations of the 1.0 system, this upgrade is intended to bring interrelatedness into the mainstream as the norm rather than the exception.

Based upon networked connections, this new mental software still retains individual power and determinism but links to the Human Network, so that consideration is given to the effect of one's actions as a matter of course. A more robust tamperproof commercial version is available for corporations, and a lobbyist-secure version with a special integrity booster has been tailored for those in government service.

What are the envisioned benefits? A world in which we all work together for the common good. A world where nations participate unselfishly on a planetary level. A world where the right to freedom, health and happiness is considered universal. In short, a fundamental shift to a life-conscious world where we can evolve a culture on this planet that is, both in thought and in deed, truly sustainable.

Ken Whitman
PUBLISHER

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In this issue

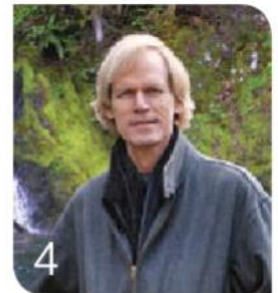


or•gan•ic [ôr gan'ik]

denoting a relation between elements of something such that they fit together harmoniously as necessary parts of a whole: *the organic unity of the integral work of art* • characterized by continuous or natural development: *companies expand as much by acquisition as by organic growth.*

4 **Matt Briggs**

The remarkable story of how a businessman, concerned about climate change and wanting to provide enabling solutions, learned to be a feature filmmaker, on his own time and money, in order to get his message across.



7 **Sacred Headwaters**

Nature journalist Wade Davis and conservation photographer Carr Clifton teamed up to document a breathtaking pristine wilderness in Canada that has now been approved for drilling and mining of gold, copper, natural gas and oil.



12 **Chef Peter Berley**

Cookbook author, food writer, chef and culinary instructor Peter Berley talks about the power of food. His vision of local community-based change embraces vegetarians, meat lovers and everyone in between.

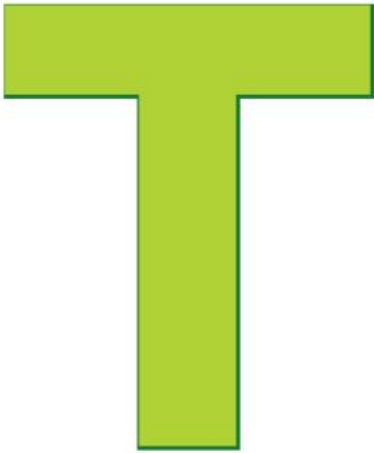


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Matt Briggs

Environmental Solutionist



There's a growing buzz surrounding a new documentary called *Deep Green*—a film that takes a positive approach: instead of leaving us scared senseless concerning the condition of our environment, it provides a wealth of solutions that clearly illustrate, in the words of the film promotion, “We can fix this.”

Most documentaries are produced by filmmakers as a way to convey a message on some aspect of society or to effect a change. But the making of *Deep Green* is a remarkable story of how a businessman, concerned about climate change and wanting to give people enabling solutions, learned to be a feature filmmaker by necessity—at his own considerable expense, on his own time, acquiring the needed skills as he went.

“At first I was just bumbling along and relying on people,” Matt Briggs told *Organic Connections*. “But the whole time I was gradually getting stronger myself, and by the end I was the director. I knew how to do what I wanted, and these people became more assistants.”

While the film was being made, Matt spent funds that he had saved during the previous 30 years from the sale of wild mushrooms, and he continued to work in the mushroom business as well, pouring all of his income into the movie. The money he earned allowed him to finance *Deep Green* and to take time off for the considerable travel involved in filming. To date, the documentary has cost him \$2 million personally.

Getting to the Truth, and the Demand for Solutions

To tell the story properly, we have to go back to 2004, when Matt was working as a volunteer for John Kerry's presidential campaign. As history tells, Kerry lost the election that year.

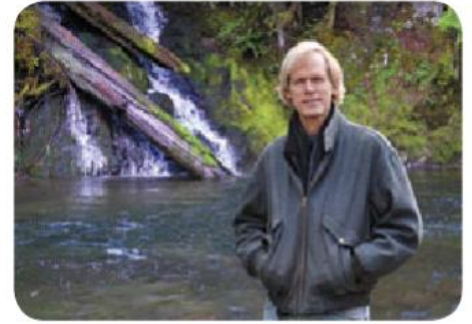
“After John Kerry lost, all the people on that team moved over to Hillary Clinton,” Matt recalled. “I didn't think she knew enough about the environment. I kind of made a stink and said I'd like to write some things down for her to read so she'd be up to speed. They said, ‘If you do the work, we'll make sure it gets read by the right people.’”

During the time Matt was involved in that research, he also witnessed Al Gore giving the slide presentation that ultimately became the film *An Inconvenient Truth*.

“I saw Al Gore give his lecture twice,” Matt said. “The second one was in Portland, Oregon, and I didn't realize they were shooting it, but it turned out to be the main part of the movie. He gave this knockout lecture and he had everybody in the palm of his hand. But he was showing everyone what the problems were, and there were no solutions—there was nothing like giving someone a piece of paper and saying, ‘Take this home. These are the top ten things you can do.’ And everybody was just hungry to go *do* something.”

“So I got mad, and I spent \$10,000 to go to a fundraiser in Washington, DC, at a private residence, and met Al Gore. I told him I would be happy to be that person, to go wherever he went and hand out ten things that people could do when they got home so that they didn't feel helpless. The response I got was along the lines of, ‘We have our own plan up ahead.’ I didn't know they were going to do the movie. But I got on them enough so that at the original showings of the film they at least had some environmental groups hand out some solutions. And in the film itself I saw that they also provided solutions; but it's as they're rolling the credits—if you leave, you never see them.”

Throughout the rest of that year, Matt carried on with the remainder of the research he was intending to deliver to the Hillary Clinton camp. It took a bit longer than expected. “I thought that research would take



a week or two and it would be done,” he said. “But it took over a year and it scared the daylights out of me. I read everything there was in English at that time that wasn't trade material—four hundred books, five or ten thousand articles—and I went to twenty-five conferences. I concluded that the consequences of inaction are much worse than people think, really much worse, and coming faster.”

Genesis of the Film

“When you can see a really bad problem that trumps most everything going on and will make most everything that's happening much worse—and you see a way to fix it, and nobody's doing it—you can't just sit there,” Matt continued.

“The original idea was just to shoot a movie that could show what one person could do in their house to save energy and live longer. That came out of seeing Al Gore's *Live Earth* event in July of 2007. Some people actually came to shoot my house because I'd done a first round—I had solar on the roof and I'd done some insulation and I'd changed some windows—but the result of that filming wasn't so great.

“And so I thought, ‘Hey, my brother is in Hollywood; he's got friends who are directors. I know a guy who is a cameraman for *60 Minutes*. Let's do a weekend shoot and show what can be done at one house.’ Well,

that expanded into filming green building innovators in my town, Portland, which was at the time the source of most of the green building information. That lasted a week. Then we decided to go to the Greenbuild Conference at McCormick Place in Chicago, which is the gathering of all the green building people from everywhere.”

But even then the results, it seems, were unsatisfactory. “We let it sit, and I looked at it and said, ‘Man, we don’t have anything here.’

“So I rethought it and went down to Hollywood in February of 2008. We were looking for a director of photography and a writer to help me, because I felt we had to make this better than just a crappy green-building thing that’s not very well shot with no real feel to it. I started learning how movies are made and how to see this stuff as a filmmaker. I began learning how to tell a good story that would interest people. I had never done that before.

“I got a writer that I really hit it off with down there, named Clark Taylor, but didn’t find anyone else I was happy with. I came back to Portland and hired an editor. We also made a connection with a guy who helped us build our production setup here with some state-of-the-art equipment.”

Green China?

The next step for Matt was leaving the US behind—and making a completely unexpected discovery.

“We found out that some of the green builders we talked to in Portland were going to China to show them how to do green building,” Matt related. “As we all know, so goes China, so goes the world on carbon. So we thought we’d follow them over there, as I’ve spent a lot of time traveling and am real familiar with China.

“In Beijing the Olympics were coming, and for the first time the Chinese were opening up their country to outside journalism. We connected to a group called Asia Work based out of Bangkok—English-speaking and trained by the BBC. We shot one item and made arrangements to meet up with them again when I came back with my full crew.

“By the time we returned several months later, the media climate was quite different. The Chinese government was throwing all the media out of China, and they had the Tibetan situation in which all the journalists were trying to get to Tibet, so it was like pulling teeth.

“But after a while, the heads of media in China—the same two guys that took Nixon

and Kissinger around—decided that our project was worthy. They really opened the door. When the Chinese heads of media tell a company or nuclear power plant or a coal power plant or whatever to let these people come in, they let you in. As a result, we got access in China to places no one had ever filmed. These included the biggest coal plants in the world, from the inside with the head people; all the solar factories for photovoltaic and hot water; and desert villages with drought. They even connected us up with environmental—we would say “protestors”; although they were definitely not free to do whatever they wanted, but they could protest within bounds.

“What we ultimately discovered was very interesting. We went over there ostensibly to

follow the Portland guys who, we thought, were going to teach them how to do stuff. What we found is that China is much further ahead on environmental issues than any of us would have imagined. In the time since we were there, the word has come out—it’s in the news everywhere how much China is working on owning twenty-first-century industries, which include all green technologies, such as high-speed trains, photovoltaic, solar hot water, electric cars, water, recycling and green building.

“They recently signed on to a National Energy Efficiency Standard—a program much like the Top Runner program in Japan, where the most efficient appliances made that year become the minimum standard



deep green

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 www.deepgreenfilms.com

Full-Scale Production



a few years later; otherwise, you can't sell them. It's continuous improvement of appliance efficiency mandated in the code. What became very apparent was that China was looking at the world—what's being done in Germany, what's being done in Japan—and seeking all these things; because the people that run China are engineers, not politicians or lawyers, and they know what works, and they don't have any qualms about science.

"Some of what they're doing is actually leading the way, especially solar hot water. The goal is by 2012, but definitely by 2015, they'll have, nationwide, solar hot water on every roof. That's huge! And they're building a high-speed train that runs so fast it's unbelievable. When you do that, it eliminates plane travel and car travel; and it's three to five times more efficient than planes, with fewer emissions."

Following the trip to China, Matt realized that the game was on for real. "After China, it was really apparent that this wasn't just a little green-building movie," he said. "So I decided to make it a major feature."

Matt decided to have animation in the film to make it more approachable and to give the audience room to breathe. Eleven animations were eventually included in the movie—eight of which were line-drawn characters from top animator Pascal Campion, who has worked at Pixar and now is working on a feature at DreamWorks.

"While we were making the film, writer Clark Taylor lived at my house for seven months, and one bedroom was transformed into one of the first high-definition editing studios on the West Coast," Matt said. "Clark had been a stand-up comedian for 20 years and had been on the road with Tom Kenny, who later voiced SpongeBob SquarePants. Tom and his wife, Jill Talley, did all the voice characterizations for two of the animations for free—just a few of many great, talented people all over the world who helped me make this movie."

Matt also saw that he would have to expand the scope of his coverage. "We decided that if we went to China, we had to go to Europe. We researched Europe and did a shoot over there for a couple of months in seven countries."

In Europe, he found more incredible innovations taking place. "The biggest and, in my view, the best solution that we found was the DESERTEC program that was being formed in Germany and Spain," Matt recounted. "This is Concentrated Solar Thermal technology, in which a whole field of mirrors is focused on a tower. Within that tower, or in pipes, water is heated up and converted to steam, which in turn runs a steam turbine that makes electricity.

"One way to store the heat from the hot water for later use is within phase-changing salts contained in large storage tanks next to the steam turbine. The salts slowly give up their heat energy after dark as they change back from gas to liquid to solid. This method of energy storage makes a renewable energy plant like this run at full power for six to seven hours at night. It becomes baseload power that can replace coal electric plants.

"To me the most interesting part of the DESERTEC program is that one company funding this is reinsurer Munich Re—a

company that is going to be out of business if the weather of the world continues to get weirder and wilder. They're financing the energy change to keep themselves from being wiped out. That's pretty cool.

"In the initial phase, they're planning on getting a large part of the energy needed for North Africa and 15 percent of what Europe needs. So, right from the first phase, they're thinking really, really big."

After Europe, Matt and his crew wrapped up the filming by going all over the United States and talking to people like Lester Brown, president and founder of the Earth Policy Institute; energy guru Amory Lovins; former director of the CIA James Woolsey; writer Michael Pollan, and many more.

The Completed Product

Now, with production finished, the documentary is being shown, and reviews from both press and viewers have been extremely positive.

Viewing *Deep Green*, with its professional style, fantastic score and vital information, you would never imagine that the man behind it had previously not made a film in his life. You wouldn't know that he'd financed it with his own savings and throughout the filming had worked in his business as a buyer and seller of wild mushrooms in order to keep it going and get it completed.

While Matt is touring the US and putting on his own presentations of *Deep Green*, he is at the tail end of closing a deal for distribution that would make it possible for the film to be shown through Internet streaming, DVD release and other mediums. That deal should close within the next few months.

In conclusion, Matt shared his motivation that guided him throughout the making of *Deep Green*. "I'm a business guy. I don't have any respect for whiners about problems. We fix stuff. We solve problems all day every day—that's what businesspeople do. How do you fix it? I think we've shown in *Deep Green* that we have the technology, as well as the known potential lifestyle changes, to lower our footprint on the life-support system. All that we need is right here, right now. We just need to put it to work and change the way we live."

Find out more about Deep Green at the film's website: www.deepgreenmovie.com.

To see a trailer of Deep Green, visit the Organic Connections site.

Sacred Headwaters

Documenting God's Country



It may be the most beautiful place in North America. This is not a statement made lightly—it is the opinion of seasoned wilderness photographers and journalists who have been all over the world and seen everything there is to see.

The area is roughly the size of Oregon and consists of virgin forests, white-water rivers, sparkling tributaries and hundreds of glaciers. It hosts plentiful wildlife, including stone sheep, bears, wolves, caribou, moose, elk and eagles. In a miraculous accident of nature, three of the most important salmon rivers in the world have their headwaters there, literally within walking distance of each other.

Best-selling author and nature journalist Wade Davis, along with renowned nature photographer Carr Clifton and a handful of others, hopes that the book they are now creating about this place, *The Sacred Headwaters*, won't be an analogous story to that of Glen Canyon—a beautiful natural stone monument carved by the Colorado River, home to thousands of ancient artifacts and hieroglyphics, that was filled in as a reservoir in the early 1960s and is now known as Lake Powell. Fortunately, before that happened, a photographer named Eliot Porter documented Glen Canyon in a book entitled *The Place No One Knew*; but now that place is gone.

In the case of the Sacred Headwaters region, it has been approved by the Canadian government for drilling and mining of gold, copper, natural gas and oil. Exploration has already begun. If the companies aiming to strip the resources out of the area succeed, it will in fact be lost to all future generations.

Describing the Sacred Headwaters

"I think for an American audience it's useful to put the whole place in perspective," Wade Davis told *Organic Connections*. "In the lower 48, the farthest you can get away from a maintained road is 20 miles. In the north-west quadrant of British Columbia, which is an area the size of Oregon, there's literally one road. Your biggest canyon, the Grand Canyon

of the Colorado River, hosts five million visitors a year, and 27,000 explore it by raft. The flow of the river is controlled by technicians at any one of the 11 dam sites, and by the time the river reaches the sea it's not a river at all; it's completely just a shadow in the sand.

"In contrast, our biggest canyon in Canada is that of the Stikine River, one of the three rivers that drain from the Sacred Headwaters. This river has never in history been successfully rafted by anyone. Less than 100 people have ever gotten through parts of it, and it's known as a K2* of white-water challenges.

"Yosemite National Park is visited every year by the equivalent population of Los Angeles. Criminal events have been reported in that small seven-square-mile valley bottom. Every night at the peak of summer, as many as 15,000 people camp out in this tiny little area, and there are 600 car accidents a year.

"People often say, 'Wouldn't it be great to know the Grand Canyon or Yosemite as they were first experienced by human beings, or certainly by non-native human beings? What was it like when John Muir went to Yosemite? Wouldn't it be great to know it like that?' Well, the answer is you can. In 1879, John Muir came up to the Stikine River and was astonished. He went up just a lower third of the river and counted 100 glaciers in its shores; and then when he climbed a mountain at a place named Glenora, he counted 100 more. He called the whole place 'a Yosemite 150 miles long.' He named his dog after the river.

"If anything, there's less traffic on that river today than there was in 1879. These three rivers—the Stikine, the Skeena and the Nass—by a kind of remarkable accident or miracle of geography, if you will, are born within extraordinarily close proximity to each other in this place known to the First Nations as the Sacred Headwaters."

The First Nations peoples who live here—the Tlingit, the Tahltan, the Gitksan, the Wet'suwet'en, the Dakelh and the Nisga'a—have been hunting and revering this land since before the advent of the white man.

Davis knows of only one other place on Earth where three iconic rivers are born so close together. In Tibet, at the base of Mount Kailas, begin three of the great rivers of Asia: the Indus, the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, which bring life to more than a billion people downstream. The region is considered so sacred by Hindu, Buddhist and Jain alike that no one is allowed to walk on its slopes, let alone violate it with industrial development.

In a very odd twist of fate, the threat to the Sacred Headwaters is not an issue that Wade Davis heard about and came running to document; he has been calling this area home for some 30 years. "I've been living up there seasonally since the mid-seventies," he said. "I was the first Park Ranger in what is British Columbia's biggest roadless wilderness park, called the Spatsizi Wilderness. Later, about 25 years ago, I bought a lodge, which is the closest private holding to the Sacred Headwaters. So I've been deeply involved with the Tahltan community and the country in general for a very long time. It's really my home."

The Prayer for the Future

Where Wade and his family used to experience silence except for the wind, the elements and the sounds of nature, they now can hear, from the lodge, the sound of exploration drilling day and night.

The proposed technologies to be employed to retrieve gas, oil and minerals from the region are, in a gross understatement, intrusive. To extract natural gas, a procedure called hydraulic fracturing will be used—a method that releases poisonous chemicals into the ground, causing them to rise to the surface and pollute groundwater and wildlife. The open-pit method of mining for copper and gold will lay waste to broad stretches of this precious land—and fill rivers, streams and lakes with mining and chemical waste.

It is only hoped that Wade and his cadre of friends—including the First Nations peoples who call this land home—can reach the eyes and ears of the politicians and businesspeople responsible with these images and with wisdom that could turn the tide.

"Ultimately, these initiatives are all for the sake of a handful of private individuals," Davis concluded. "What's fascinating about that is we take as a given this overall kind of





Carr Clifton, bless him, spent four months building up this extraordinary portfolio of images, for no money whatsoever, because we have to bring this story to the world. —Wade Davis, author of *The Sacred Headwaters*

economic model because it is the way that we, a resource-driven economy, rationalize the industrialization of the wild. Since we take it as a given, we assume it's the norm; but most assuredly it is not the normal way in which people interact with the natural world, as my travels have certainly shown and as I've written about many times.

"What I find curious is there's not a single metric in the calculus that rationalizes the industrialization of the wild that places any value whatsoever on the *land left alone*—what it is worth to us in a pristine state. The whole thing should be considered criminal activity—even to contemplate it—let alone to have such a move actually occur with the blessing of the government."

Follow issues in the region by visiting www.skeenawatershed.com.

*K2: A mountain in northern Kashmir, in the Karakoram Range, on the border between China and Pakistan. At 28,250 ft, it is the second highest peak in the world, known for its difficulty of ascent and the high fatality rate of those who climb it.

The Photos of Carr Clifton

"I'm a member of the International League of Conservation Photographers (ILCP), and we got an e-mail saying that they needed a landscape photographer for this spot in the Sacred Headwaters," Carr Clifton told *Organic Connections*. "This was on very short notice and was being urged by Wade Davis. I kind of hemmed and hawed and found out who else was involved. They hardly had anybody because it was such short notice, so I had to at least go see. I figured I could always leave if it wasn't really what I was into doing."

"I was only scheduled to be there three weeks, and stayed four. I did have to fly home because I had a previous commitment; so I flew home, took care of that commitment and within seven days I was driving back up in my truck with a camper on it. I stayed another five weeks. Knowing landscape, they should have had us shooting during fall, because it would have been much more beautiful when

snow started flying on the peaks and all the aspens and cottonwoods were changing color. So I simply took it upon myself, because I knew they didn't have enough material for this book project. I just decided to stay and shoot until the snow began flying. It really paid off; it was phenomenal."

Part of the technology brought in by mining companies for exploration turned out to be greatly to Clifton's benefit. "Because they are exploring all this mining, there are quite a few helicopter companies in the region to take geologists out there," Clifton said. "So we had about five or six different helicopter companies that we could pick from and basically fight fire with fire—you're burning petrochemicals at an alarming rate in a helicopter, but you've got to get out to those places to photograph them. It's kind of like Jacques Cousteau, who couldn't have just gone to sea in a kayak to try to inform the public of what was out there. It was quite exciting and paid off hugely with the photographs, especially of all the areas that were inaccessible. These areas didn't even have trails. You could get in by river and you could get in by air and that was it."

"Shooting was fantastic from the helicopters," Clifton recalled. "I would watch the weather and pick a day. It's very expensive—\$800 to \$1,000 an hour—to fly in these things; so you really can't just go, 'Hey, let's go take a look.' You have to pick exactly. You figure out where you want to go; you wait for the right weather; you wait for the right clouds; you let that sun get a little bit low—then you go shoot. I would wait until there were only about three hours left of light in the afternoon, with the perfect clouds for the extra magic. I just wanted that magic: I wanted mist; I wanted a little bit of storminess sometimes. We even hit rain on a couple of occasions. But the great thing about a helicopter was that we could divert around the heavy storms and find





somewhere else. That was extra special, to see this land from the air and to be able to see it in the perfect light and at the perfect time of year. It was incredible.

“One of the more critical areas is around Red Chris Mine, where they’re proposing what we think is strip mining,” Clifton continued. “There’s a lake there called Black Lake, and earlier we had been out and had photographed it in kind of a bad light. We got pictures, but they weren’t very good.

“So on a separate flight later on in the fall, another photographer, Paul Colangelo, and I were shooting from the helicopter and we were a fair distance south of that region. When we got done shooting where we were, we had just a little bit more light and it was quite stormy. The sun was starting to almost go over the horizon, so we decided to head toward Black Lake because we needed more pictures of it. By the time we got there, we had God’s rays coming into that valley and it was peak fall color and it had just rained. It was phenomenal, and we just cleaned up. We were ecstatic. That flight went over the

normal limit; we were running on fumes. The pilot was even a little bit anxious. We were trying to shoot this one last scene, and he said, ‘You’ve got one chance on this. We’re going to fly by and you’re going to shoot it and that’s it.’ But it was one of those things—we hadn’t

“The Sacred Headwaters is a really important region. In all the traveling I’ve done, this is one of the most prime locations I’ve ever seen. It needs to be protected. It’s the wrong place for us to go in and extract resources from.”

In 1879, John Muir came up to the Stikine River and was astonished. He went up just a lower third of the river and counted 100 glaciers in its shores; and then when he climbed a mountain at a place named Glenora, he counted 100 more. He called the whole place ‘a Yosemite 150 miles long.’

planned on it, we hadn’t timed it, and we’d almost forgotten that we hadn’t taken pictures of that area yet; and it was probably the most essential area to get. The results were gorgeous, absolutely gorgeous.

All photos in this feature © Carr Clifton Photography.



Chef Peter Berley

The Power of Food

by Bruce Boyers

It has become clear that if we're to survive as a species—both from an environmental and a health point of view—we must grow our food sustainably and locally. It is a torch that Chef Peter Berley has been carrying for some 40 years, and he is now dedicated to bringing the beauty, nutrition and flavor of local, seasonal food to everyone—by putting people directly in touch with food sources and teaching them how to fully enjoy the bounty of the harvest.

Peter Berley is a working chef, cookbook author and culinary instructor, whose primary concerns are the development of local, sustainable food systems and the fate of home cooking in America. He is the former executive chef of the world-renowned Angelica Kitchen restaurant in New York City and the current chef at The Culinary Loft, also in the city. He teaches classes at The Institute of Culinary Education and the Natural Gourmet Institute, and can also be seen in vegetarian segments of the *Conscious Cooking* series for FoodNetwork.com.

Peter's books include *The Modern Vegetarian Kitchen*, winner of two prestigious awards; *Fresh Food Fast*, which was placed among the top 25 cookbooks of 2005; and *The Flexitarian Table: Inspired, Flexible Meals for Vegetarians, Meat Lovers, and Everyone in Between*.

He has also been a contributing writer to *Edible Brooklyn*, *Food & Wine*, *Bon Appétit*, *Every Day with Rachel Ray*, *Natural Health*, *Cooking Light* and *Fine Cooking* magazines.

An Early Sustainable Introduction

Everyone who has become a proponent of locally and sustainably grown food usually has an interesting story of how they came to be that way. Peter is no different.

"In 1971 I met Michio Kushi, a philosopher and businessman," Peter told *Organic Connections*. "Kushi was a student of George Ohsawa from Japan and came over to the United States at the behest of Ohsawa. Ohsawa had a school in Japan called Maison Ignoramus, which basically taught the philosophy that food can be a gateway to peace—if people understand that eating a locally grown, seasonal grain-based diet will help promote both health and economic security for people.

"Ohsawa coined the term *macrobiotic*, which is from Greek, meaning 'large life.' The macrobiotic movement was kind of a spiritual movement but based in physical

the history of food in my family led me away from the diet based on brown rice and seaweed—which is very much from Japan—to one of more whole grains, sourdough bread, dairy and meat products, and things like that. But I was always eager to know how these foods were produced and from what traditions they came. Of course, that went up against the wall of American agribusiness and corporate farming, which was all happening in the seventies and has continued to develop.

"I moved to Maine in 1986 and ran a restaurant in an area where we had some local farms. One of them was a really great one, Molly and Paul Birdsall's Horsepower Farm,



health and the understanding that there is an order to nature, and that local, seasonal eating is the way to promote not only human health but human intellectual and spiritual development. I was a teenager when I got introduced to macrobiotics, and I became really fascinated with it. I also had some health issues and I was able to resolve them through changing my diet.

"After about eight years of following this philosophy, I started to get really interested in my own roots, which were from Eastern Europe—my grandparents came over to Brooklyn in about 1905 and settled here. Studying

where I was able to get beans and lamb and all their produce for my restaurant. I became very involved with local eating. Scott and Helen Nearing were also a big influence with their back-to-the-land movement that they started in the sixties, which was in Maine."

Flavor and Energy

Like a number of top chefs, including Alice Waters, Wolfgang Puck, Rick Bayless and Suzanne Goin, Peter sees that locally and sustainably raised food wins hands down when it comes to flavor and nutrition.



“Everything relates to taste, whether it’s locally grown or grown far away,” Peter explained. “How it’s grown and produced will affect flavor. The shorter the distance between the harvest and your cooking of it in your kitchen, the more the flavor will be intact. Flavor is directly influenced by time, in good ways and bad ways. In good ways, it is mellowed by time through fermentation, but in negative ways it’s affected through decomposing. Decomposing comes from foods that are not controlled through fermentation but begin to decompose and rot. So the longer you have your produce away from your garden, the faster it’s going to decompose unless you either preserve it in some way, cook it right away or hold it in refrigeration. And the closer you are to the source of your food, the more energy will be available to you from the food.”

Peter has also observed that soil has much to do with the final product. “The soil is where everything begins,” he continued. “The quality of the soil depends on locale, weather conditions and geological foundations. It depends on everything connected to the *terroir*—*terroir* being of the place that you’re growing something.* It’s the characteristics

that come through the food. The nature, the quality and the personality of the food are an expression of *terroir*, and those can only come from the locale in which the produce is grown; and if you live within that locale you’re going to experience much more of that *terroir* than you would if you lived far away and the produce had to travel to you. So that’s the argument for eating locally.”

Teaching

Of all of his endeavors, Peter especially enjoys teaching. “Oh, it’s been a ball,” he said. “There’s just more and more interest year by year. People are really very concerned with making personal connections to where their food comes from.”

In fact, Peter is so committed to teaching that he is now constructing his own school. “I’m building my own culinary studio where I’ll be teaching, and also filming classes and creating books. It’s going to be in Jamesport on the north fork of Long Island, which is a wonderful farming community. We have many fantastic vineyards and vegetable farms, and we’ve got pastured beef cattle and poultry being raised now. We’ve also got

local scallop and oyster farms; there’s a whole movement toward people having their own oyster beds, which clean the water and prevent pollution from affecting us as much.

“I’ll be opening in mid-April, and I’m going to have a 1,000-square-foot four-season garden so that I can grow crops for my kitchen year-round.

“I want to develop an online community of people who can take classes, people who can’t come to me. The classes are going to be very small and will be focused on food crafting, do-it-yourself projects for people to take home, such as fermenting vegetables—sauerkraut, kimchi and that kind of thing; sourdough bread baking; pickling; canning, smoking and preserving meat; and curing ham. The cool thing is that I can run workshops where people can see the whole cycle. For example, artisanal bread baking requires at least nine to ten hours at a minimum to be able to culture your dough, ferment it and bake it. We’ll have that kind of time.

“I’ll also be teaching people how to cook with wood. That’s very important for me, as I feel that wood is the best fuel for cooking—it’s a much finer and more even energy.

"Really, the whole model of my cooking now is very local. It's based on a garden, nearby farms, a cellar in which I can age and cure, a wood-fired source of heat that I can cook with, and a beautiful kitchen that is just full of light—it's lit overhead with skylights and it has windows all around; the air smells nice and you can hear the birds, unlike an industrial setting in the city."

To the Remainder of Society

Peter sees the societal switch to locally and sustainably grown food occurring at the personal level. "It's my belief that the route is person to person, like what I'm doing now. I think it stems from the grassroots community. I don't have as much faith in political movements, in sweeping economic philosophical changes. I see much more power in local community-based change. To me, that comes from your own dinner table, your own kitchen, what you put in your pot, and how you share that with your friends and your family. So my vision is sort of a change through personal gardening and personal cooking, and that's why I've set up what I've set up on the north fork. It's basically a place where people

can come and see that I have a garden, that I have a cellar, that I have a kitchen, and that I'm sustaining myself through my relationship with my local environment. I'm hopeful that this will inspire others to do the same wherever they live, whether they are in a city or in the country.

"Other people are also now coming up with

finding ways and means of planting food wherever they are. So I think that's the grassroots movement that could possibly bring about some changes.

"I really believe in the power of food, because ultimately the basis of war, the basis of economy, is all food—resources and food. When people don't have access to soil,

The closer you are to the source of your food, the more energy will be available to you from the food.

all sorts of ideas for this type of thing. I just returned from the TEDxManhattan conference. One person who was there started this whole window-box hydroponic system for growing plants in your apartment. Talk about local—I mean that's right in your own apartment. I don't see this as an answer in terms of growing enough food to really sustain yourself, but at least you are creating a connection to where you live and where some sustenance is coming from. Elsewhere, people are growing food on their roofs and even in their automobiles. There's a guy who just did a movie called *Truck Farm*—he put a little garden in the back of a 4x4. More and more people are

or it's been taken away from them or it's been polluted, they get angry for a good reason and things start to change. So I think our relationship to food is really the gateway to changing our world."

All photos in this feature © David Leach Photography. For more about Peter Berley, his activities and books, visit his website at <http://peterberley.com>.

* *Terroir* is originally a French term relating to wine, coffee and tea, used to denote the special characteristics that the geography, geology and climate of a certain region bestow upon particular varieties.



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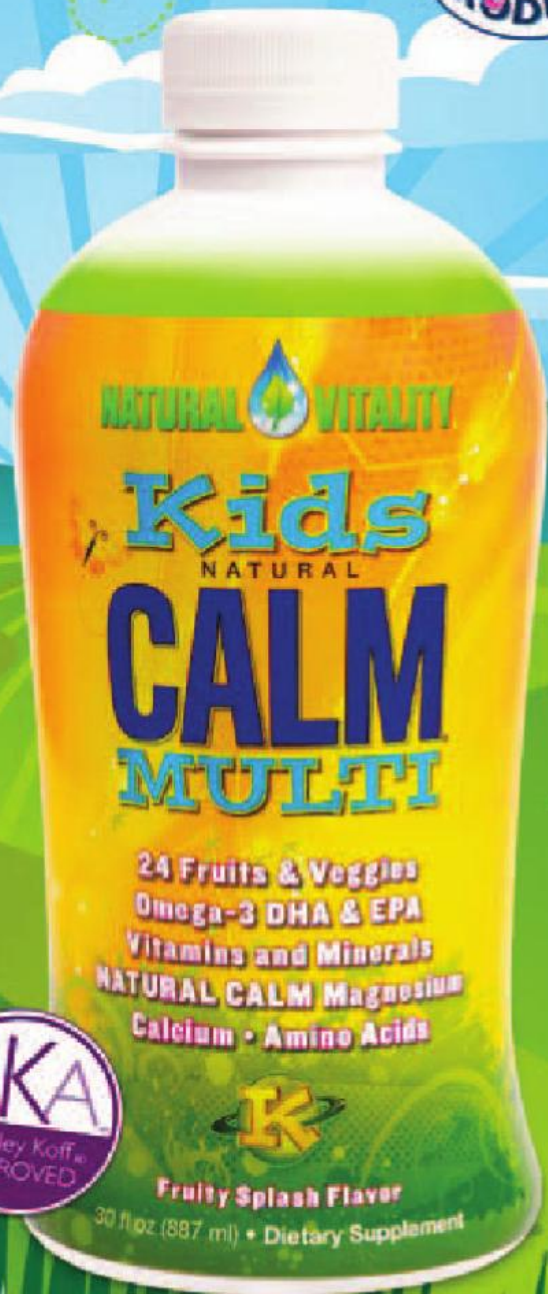
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