

Community

Do not protect yourself by a fence, but rather by your friends.

—CZECH PROVERB

Urban agriculture is distinct from rural growing, not just in terms of access to space, but also in regard to proximity of people. Neighborhood gentrifiers often view the humans on the block as obstacles to the beautiful gardens they want to establish. They view community in terms of vandalism, theft, and trespassing. Gardens that are created by and for community members see humans as essential components of the urban ecology, integral to the health of the space.

There is no substitute for creating a garden space together with neighbors from the ground up. It is much more difficult to “outreach” to stakeholders after key decisions have been made. Ownership comes from authentic involvement from the beginning and the shared power that ensues. Once a garden is established, certain practices encourage ongoing community involvement:



Youth investigate a sunflower with Black urban farmer and author of *The Color of Food*, Natasha Bowens. Photo courtesy of Natasha Bowens.

- Transparent membership process and decision-making structures so new people can get involved
- Regular community volunteer days, tours, workshops, meals, and public celebrations
- Open gate, low fence, or no fence
- Multilingual signage indicating name and purpose of the garden, and contact information for getting involved
- Donations or low-cost sales of produce to neighbors
- Designated planters at the garden edge with signs indicating that people can help themselves
- Maintenance of a beautiful and organized space that inspires pride

We want to offer a shout-out to some urban farms and urban farming initiatives that were founded and led by Black people and exemplify community ownership. This list is certainly incomplete. Reach out in your city to connect with the courageous urban farmers who are leaders in the Black land sovereignty movement.

- D-Town Farm, Detroit, Michigan
- East New York Farms!, Brooklyn, New York
- Farm a Lot Program, Detroit, Michigan (founded by Black mayor Coleman Young, 1974)¹¹
- Farms to Grow, Oakland, California
- Garden of Happiness, Bronx, New York
- Gardening the Community, Springfield, Massachusetts
- Growing Power, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (now stewarded by Green Veterans)
- Hattie Carthan Community Garden, Brooklyn, New York
- La Mott Community Garden, Cheltenham, Pennsylvania
- RID-ALL Green Partnership, Cleveland, Ohio
- Ron Finley Project, Los Angeles, California
- Sankofa Farm at Bartram’s Garden, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- Soilful City, Washington, DC
- Truly Living Well, Atlanta, Georgia
- Urban Growers Collective, Chicago, Illinois

CHAPTER TWELVE

Cooking and Preserving

I need to hear the bumping of pestles making percussion with sunrise and twilight. I need the scratch of grating tubers and the grinding of spices on stone. I need the sonic world of the ancestors, lullabies said while babies are fed, bawdy songs as the land is smoothed for planting. I need to understand the sound of the wind in the rice and the complexities of the yam mounds intercropped to save space. I need the rustle of the oil palm fronds so I can hear the generations speak.

—MICHAEL W. TWITTY, *The Cooking Gene: A Journey Through African American Culinary History in the Old South*

The two-hour round trip to pick up 80-year-old Mama Isola from her modest apartment in a senior housing complex was rousing and challenging. We were on our way to the farm to facilitate a workshop on canning and food preserving. Mama Isola, the canning expert with decades of life experience, would teach the content. I, the young organizer, would convene the people and ensure that all necessary supplies and equipment were in place. As we drove, Mama Isola told me about life as a young girl in Mississippi. Her family raised all of the vegetables and meat they needed to survive and only went to the store for “flour and sugar.” She also

explained to me that I needed to learn how to cook properly so that my husband would never leave me. “Men love through their stomachs,” she explained, waving her tattered copy of *The Way to a Man’s Heart* for emphasis. I lovingly countered, “My man needs to learn how to cook so I don’t leave him!” She just shook her head.

Mama Isola offered the 20 aspiring young homesteaders plenty of insider tips on canning during her afternoon in our farm kitchen. “Put a metal spoon in the hot beets so your jar doesn’t crack . . . Scald the tomatoes with boiling water and the skins come right off . . . Did you wash your hands properly, young lady, or do you want to poison your husband with nasty germs?” Learning from elders involves more effort and complexity than looking up procedures online. We decided to embrace the rich texture of intergenerational transference and were blessed with a day of learning, laughter, and heritage.

Too often we are told that healthy cooking and food preservation is a “white people thing,” when in fact, the unhealthy aspects of our cuisine resulted from the deprivations instituted under slavery. In this chapter we uplift traditional and contemporary African Diasporic diets, recipes, and food preservation methods. We also offer strategies for stocking up and eating healthy on a limited budget.



Mother Isola teaches a canning workshop at Soul Fire Farm. Photo by Jonah Vitale-Wolff.

African Food Pyramid

In addition to mass incarceration, one of the most insidious and pervasive forms of state violence against our people is the flooding of our communities with foods that kill us. In fact, Black people are 10 times more likely to die from poor diets than from all forms of physical violence combined. From the corner store, to the public school lunchroom, to the prisons, our federal government subsidizes the processed foods that undermine the health and future of our community. The USDA invests \$130 billion annually into industrial agriculture and commodity foods, such as wheat, soy, milk, and dairy, and comparatively little into “specialty crops” like vegetables.¹ White neighborhoods have an average of four times as many supermarkets as predominantly black communities.

Fast-food chains and junk-food corporations disproportionately target their advertising to children of color, resulting in an epidemic of childhood obesity and diabetes.² In our Black communities nearly 40 percent of the children are overweight or obese, a higher percentage than for other ethnic groups. African Americans are also two times as likely to have diabetes as whites, and 29 percent more likely to die prematurely of all causes than Americans as a whole. And perhaps most insidious, in this wealthy nation, one in three black children and one in four Latino children go to bed hungry at night. Clearly, the current food system does not have the best interests of our community in mind. We believe that the term *food desert* is too passive to describe the inequity in today’s food system. Our mentor, Black farmer-activist Karen Washington, taught us to recognize

America for what it is, a deliberate “food apartheid” where certain populations live in food opulence and others cannot meet their basic survival needs.

Traditional African diets are inherently healthy and sustainable, based in leafy greens, vegetables, fruits, tubers, and legumes. Communities that maintain our traditional diets have much lower rates of heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, diabetes, cancer, asthma, glaucoma, kidney disease, low-birthweight babies, obesity, and depression. When our ancestors, survivors of the Middle Passage, first reached plantation America, they attempted to continue their traditional diets, growing and preparing boiled yams, eddoes (or taros), okra, callaloo, and plantain, which they seasoned generously with cayenne pepper and salt. Under enslavement and colonization, their diets began to shift and their health began to deteriorate. On meager rations of corn and the offcuts of pork, and with little time to grow vegetables, our enslaved ancestors suffered from deficiencies in protein, thiamine, niacin, calcium, magnesium, and vitamin D. As a result of poor diet and living conditions, half of the infant children of enslaved mothers died before their first birthday, twice the mortality rate of white children. Children who survived often suffered from night blindness, abdominal swellings, swollen muscles, bowed legs, skin lesions, and convulsions from chronic undernourishment.

A litany of recent scientific studies has verified the value of traditional African diets for long-term health. One recent study involving 4,543 participants showed that rural Ghanaians ate more roots, tubers, plantains, and fermented corn products as compared with Ghanaians living in Europe, who ate more rice, pasta, meat, sweets, dairy, and oils. The rural Ghanaians had a lower body mass index (BMI) than their European counterparts.³ Similarly, studies show that colon cancer impacts a greater proportion of African Americans than rural Africans. Researchers put 20 middle-aged African Americans on a traditional African heritage diet (averaging 55 grams of fiber daily and 16 percent calories from fat, with foods like mangoes, bean soup, and fish) and 20 middle-aged rural South Africans on a typical American diet (averaging

12 grams of fiber daily and 52 percent calories from fat, with foods like pancakes, burgers, fries, and meat loaf). After two weeks on the African heritage diet, African Americans increased the diversity of their healthy gut bacteria, increased levels of butyrate, an anticancer chemical, and reduced inflammation of their colons. On the other hand, the Africans on the American diet produced more bile acid and decreased the diversity of healthy gut bacteria.⁴

It is imperative that we decolonize our diets and reclaim African traditional foodways. Disease and early death are not part of our ancestral heritage. From the Black American South to the Caribbean, from South America to West Africa, there are commonalities in the traditional diet. We base our meals on leafy greens, vegetables, and tubers enlivened with ample herbs, spices, and sauces. We consume fresh fruits often and only make decadent desserts for special occasions. We use fish and meat in small quantities, usually to flavor a stew, and only eat meat in quantity on celebration days. Dairy is rare in our cuisine, and when we do consume it, we first

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Traditional African Diet

According to a 1730s enslaver, the diets of the Dahomey people made them strong and able to resist: “Those from the Gold Coast, who are accustomed to Freedom and inhabit a dry Champain Country and feed on nutritious and solid aliments, such as Flesh, Fish, Bread of Indian Corn, are healthy and robust; little subject to Mortality; very hardy and turbulent, as well as much disposed to rise on the White People . . .”⁵ May the reclamation of our traditional diet fortify us for resistance against tyranny in present time.

ferment the milk into yogurt or buttermilk. Most important, we cook and eat together. In Kroboland, Ghana, whenever a person is eating and someone passes by, the person says, “*Ba eh no*” (come and eat). Our tables are healing tables, fellowship tables, and living history tables. We offer our gratitude to the Oldways Preservation Trust for creating the African Heritage Diet Pyramid to uplift our healthy, traditional ways of eating (see table 12.1).

Recipes

The teens are often reluctant to touch one another when we ask them to join hands around the center

island in the kitchen to set intentions before we cook lunch together. We let them know that it is fine to touch elbows instead, so long as they focus their attention on putting love into the food we are about to bring forth. Each young chef shares an intention in the presence of the modest kitchen altar: “I want the food to taste good . . . I want to use the big knife . . .” The learners relax a little bit when they see Goya Adobo and hot sauce on the shelf, feeling more assured that we will not be creating some bland white folks food. We break into teams for chopping, grating, and mixing, and soon the kitchen is filled with the rich smells of hot chili and corn bread and the crisp sounds of

Table 12.1. Common Foods of African Heritage by Oldways Preservation Trust

Frequency	Ingredients
Base every meal on these foods	Leafy greens: Beet greens, cabbage, callaloo, chard, collard greens, dandelion greens, kale, mustard greens, spinach, turnip greens, wild foraged spring greens. Vegetables: Asparagus, beets, brussels sprouts, broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, eggplant, garlic, green beans, jicama, lettuce, long bean, okra, onions, peppers, pumpkin, radish, scallion, squashes, zucchini. Fruits: Avocados, bananas, blackberries, blueberries, cherries, dates, dewberry, figs, grapefruit, guava, horned melon, lemons, limes, mangoes, oranges, papaya, peaches, pineapple, plums, pomegranates, oranges, tamarind, tomatoes, watermelon. Grains: Amaranth, barley, couscous, fonio, kamut, maize, millet, rice, sorghum, tef, wild rice. Tubers: Breadfruit, cassava, plantains, potatoes, sweet potatoes, taro, yams, yucca. Beans: Black-eyed peas, broad beans, butter beans, chickpeas, cowpeas, kidney beans, lentils, lima beans, pigeon peas. Nuts and seeds: Benne seeds, Brazil nuts, cashews, coconuts, dika nuts, ground nuts, peanuts, pecans, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds. Herbs, spices, and sauces: Annatto, arrowroot, bay leaf, cinnamon, cilantro, cloves, coconut milk, coriander, dill, ginger, mustard, nutmeg, oregano, paprika, parsley, peppers, sage, sesame, vinegar.
Use sparingly in meals	Oils: Coconut oil, olive oil, palm oil, sesame oil, shea butter. Fish and seafood: Bream, catfish, cod, crappie, crayfish, dried fish, mackerel, mussels, oysters, perch prawns, mackerel, rainbow trout, sardines, shrimp, tuna.
2–3 times per week	Poultry, eggs, and other meats: Beef, chicken, eggs, lamb, turkey. Dairy: Buttermilk, yogurt.
Small portions 2–3 times per week	Sweets: Cakes, custards, cobblers, pies made with fruits and nuts.
Special occasions	

Source: “African Heritage Diet,” Oldways, <https://oldwayspt.org/traditional-diets/african-heritage-diet>.



Young people prepare a meal together at Soul Fire Farm. Photo by Capers Rumph.



Soul Fire Farm participants enjoy a 100 percent African heritage diet during the program, based on leafy greens, vegetables, and tubers enlivened with ample herbs, spices, and sauces.

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Chef Kabui and Other Radical Black Chefs of Today

Chef Njathi Kabui has dedicated his life to decolonizing food by preparing and teaching others how to prepare what he calls “Afro-futuristic diasporic cuisine.” He was born in rural Kenya to an agricultural family that never traveled outside of the region. To those who believe that cuisine and ideas should be static, he challenges, “How unfair would it be for the first person in the family to leave the continent, the first to get an undergraduate degree, the first to get a graduate degree, the first to be published, the first to be a chef—for that person to then cook the same as his grandmother who never left home?” At the same time, he believes that farming must carry on ancestral legacy, advising, “Every one of us has a family history in growing and preparing food. So, find it. Connect with it, with that ancestor. Carry it on.”

Kabui now lives in an intentional community in North Carolina where he hosts decolonization dinners, manages a busy touring schedule, and grows African vegetables like moringa, spider plant, ngai ngai (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*), amaranth, and black nightshade. An example of a dish that honors both legacy and innovation is Chef Kabui’s “kuriam.” Its base is millet, the first ever domesticated grain and an African native. The boiled millet is topped with a sauce of celery, beets, tomatoes, garlic, mushrooms,

salad-in-the-making. Every single person loves the food they created together. In fact, all 1,768 young people who have cooked a meal at Soul Fire Farm have enjoyed it without exception. One participant explained, “I thought lettuce was nasty, but this lettuce is actually good.”

rosemary, basil, and “Kenya delight” spice mix containing cloves, fennel seeds, coriander, cumin, and cayenne. In Kenya beets are only fed to the cows, and people generally dislike fennel and celery. Chef Kabui has found ways to adapt the traditional millet dish to incorporate locally available spices and vegetables in his new home.

Chef Kabui is one of the innumerable radical Black chefs paving the way for our people to decolonize and re-indigenize our diets. We also want to shout out Tennessee-born Afro-vegan chef Bryant Terry, who remixes our beloved recipes from the Caribbean, West Africa, and the American South with nutrient-dense plant ingredients, each accompanied by a sweet musical track to play while you cook. We also honor Chef Michael Twitty, the spokesperson for the movement for “culinary justice,” whose research and culinary creations honor the vast number of Black cooks who created the Creole cuisines of the Atlantic world, and whose names are often forgotten. We also want to shout out some up-and-coming Afro-Latinx chefs, Gabriela Alvarez of Liberation Cuisine and Merelis Catalina Ortiz and Ysanet Batista of Woke Foods. Both women-led collectives are using Caribbean ancestral foods as tools for community healing.

In this section, we share the most popular heritage recipes that we prepare at Soul Fire Farm during our youth programs and Black Latinx Farmers Immersion. All of our recipes are based on locally available, whole, healthy, plant ingredients. All of the recipes have a sacred connection to our ancestry as Black people.

Soup Joumou

Soup Joumou is the soup of Independence, the soup of remembrance, and the soup that celebrates the New Year. The soul-warming dish commemorates January 1, 1804, the date of Haiti’s liberation from France. The soup was once a delicacy reserved for white enslavers but forbidden to the enslaved people who cooked it. After Independence, Haitians took to eating it to celebrate the world’s first and only successful revolution of enslaved people resulting in an independent nation.

Active time: 30 minutes |
Total time: 1 hour, 15 minutes | **Yield:** 6–8 servings

1 pound (0.5 kg) Kabocha squash or Caribbean pumpkin, peeled and chopped
Oil (canola, safflower, or sunflower)
4 cloves garlic, crushed
1 celery stalk, chopped
1 large onion, chopped
2 potatoes, chopped
1/2 pound (0.25 kg) cabbage, chopped
1 turnip, diced
2 carrots, chopped
2 leeks or scallions, chopped
1 can (12 ounces/360 ml) whole coconut milk

8 cups (2 L) water
1 cup sweet corn, fresh or canned
1 tablespoon chopped parsley
1 whole Scotch bonnet pepper or other spicy pepper
1 tablespoon lime juice
2 whole cloves
Salt
Pepper
Thyme
Splash of sweetener (optional)
8 ounces (226 g) pasta (optional)

Coat the squash/pumpkin in oil and roast until golden brown and tender. Simultaneously, in a separate pan, roast the remaining vegetables (except the corn, parsley, and hot pepper) in oil and a bit of salt until golden and tender. Blend the cooked squash with the coconut milk in a blender or food processor, then add this to the water in a medium stockpot and bring to a low boil. Stir in the roasted vegetables and the corn, parsley, and hot pepper. Add spices to taste. Cook for 15 to 20 minutes to blend the flavors. If you are using pasta, add it when there are 10 remaining minutes of cook time.

Note: The squash and hot peppers are essential ingredients. All other ingredients can be replaced with similar vegetables that are locally available.



Soup Joumou cooks over coals during the New Year festivities in Leogane, Haiti.

Fruit Cobbler

Grandmommy's peach cobblers were the highlight of holiday meals. While the decadent cakes and pies of the Black South make our hearts swoon, the fruit-based cobblers are most adaptable to a healthy lifestyle and should be our go-to dessert.

Active time: 15 minutes | **Total time:** 50 minutes
| Yield: 6 servings

- 8 peaches, sliced, or 6 apples, peeled, cored, and cut into wedges
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1/3 cup (80 ml) apple cider
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup (50 g) oats
- 1 1/2 cups (170 g) raw nuts or seeds, chopped (pecans, cashews, almonds, peanuts, sunflower seeds)
- 2 tablespoons honey or maple syrup
- 4 tablespoons butter or coconut oil
- Yogurt (optional)

For the fruit filling, toss together the fruit, lemon juice, apple cider, half of the spices, and the salt. In a separate bowl combine the oats, chopped nuts, the remainder of the spices, the sweetener, and the oil. Spread the fruit into a shallow baking pan. Sprinkle the topping evenly over the fruit. Bake the cobbler at 350°F (180°C) until the fruit is bubbling and the topping is golden, 35 to 45 minutes. Serve with yogurt.

Variation: Cook the topping separately on a baking sheet at 325°F (170°C) until crispy but not burned. Use as a crumble on fresh fruit.

Food Preservation

Fall evenings at Soul Fire Farm are about stocking up for the winter. As Fannie Lou Hamer said, "When you've got 400 quarts of greens and gumbo

soup canned for the winter, nobody can push you around or tell you what to say or do."⁶ Our kitchen is filled with piles of red hot chili peppers and garlic, filling the air with pungent fire and getting ready to become hot sauce. On the rug are bowls of maize and pods of beans waiting to be casually shelled while we chat after dinner. The cars serve as makeshift drying ovens, filled with racks of herbs and greens that infuse the seats with the aroma of their airborne oils. Sauerkraut bubbles out of its jars on the counter, freezer bags are laden with berries, and tomato sauce boils down in the Crock-Pot. Every year we try to beat our record for how many days we can hold out between last harvest and first trip to the supermarket for vegetables. So far we have managed to make it to January before the craving for the flavors outside of our region overtakes us. Having a full larder must be part of our collective survival strategy. We are beholden to those who feed us and would much prefer to be beholden to ourselves and one another rather than the industrial food system. In this section we share our tried-and-true food preservation strategies.

Preserving in Soil and Ash

Hardy vegetables can be stored for months in the soil and retain their freshness and vitamin content. Candidates for soil storage include root vegetables like potatoes, carrots, parsnips, turnips, beets, and sweet potatoes, as well as cabbage, brussels sprouts, and celery. Dig a hole 8 inches (20 cm) deep and wide enough to accommodate the amount of root vegetables to be preserved. At the bottom of the hole spread sand and wood ashes to keep out slugs. Place wire-mesh hardware cloth at the bottom and around the edges of the hole to stop rodents. Remove damaged or rotten parts of the vegetables before stacking them in the hole. Place a small bundle of twigs upright in the center of the vegetables to encourage ventilation. Pile the vegetables to a height of 8 to 12 inches (20 to 30 cm) above the level of the ground, then cover the mound with 8 inches of straw. Use the soil you dug out of the hole

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Food Preservation of West Africa

Jean Nduwimana, a farmer in Eastern Burundi, sifts the ash from his fire three or four times to remove residues and debris. Then he places the ash into a paper carton and stacks his tomato harvest in neat rows amid the ash. With this technique, Mr. Nduwimana keeps his tomatoes fresh for five to six months.⁷ He is part of a long legacy of African farmers who developed innovative methods to preserve the harvest.

In Ghana farmers immerse fresh cassava root in 195°F (90°C) water for three to five minutes to slow microbial action and extend the storage life of the crop by two weeks. Alternatively, they bury the roots in moist soil to extend their freshness. When an even more stable food product is desired, these farmers prepare *gari* by roasting grated and fermented cassava in large pans over open fires. They peel, wash, and grate the roots, then pack the pulp into jute bags. These bags are stacked on wooden racks for three to four days and pressed to remove the starchy juice. The pulp is dried in the sun and roasted in pans. The farmers also make *kotonte* by slicing cassava roots and setting them out to

dry in the sun. Similarly, hot peppers and okra are blanched in hot water and then dried on mats in the sun.

Ghanaian farmers preserve fish through smoking, drying, fermenting, and salting. For example, whole mackerel, cassava fish, and seabream can be arranged in layers separated by sticks in smoking ovens. The smoke is generated by burning wood chips, sugarcane chaff, and coconut husks at low temperatures for a full day. To preserve fish by salting, farmers place crude salt in the gut cavity of the fish then arrange the fish in wooden barrels with more salt sprinkled on each layer. After two to three days, the fish are spread out to dry in the sun. To make "stink fish" to flavor stews, the fish is left to ferment for 9 to 48 hours before salting.

In many cases the food preservation methods increase the nutritional content of the product. After smoking the fish, 100 percent increases occurred in the riboflavin, thiamin, and niacin content (compared with a dry-weight basis). While unprocessed cassava contains toxic cyanogenic glucosides, processing the cassava into *gari* hydrolyzes these compounds.⁸

Drying

If you have access to a hot radiator, woodstove, electric drying, or ambient climate that is hot and dry, preservation by food drying is a suitable method for you. One of our favorite dried foods to make is vegetable bouillon powder. We use celery, carrots, garlic, onion, basil, peppers, and tomato, though almost any vegetable or herb can be included. Finely chop or pulse your desired herbs and vegetables and

to cover the straw, further encouraging airtightness and insulation. The last step is to cover the air shaft made by the twigs with a piece of plastic or metal to keep out rain. You can remove vegetables from the pit throughout the winter, so long as you reconstruct the insulative barrier each time. Some farmers like to dig a separate pit for each vegetable. Personally, I like to layer vegetables such that I can open the pit once every two weeks and have a ready assortment of the vegetables I am likely to use.

place them in the dehydrator for one to two days until completely desiccated. In lieu of a dehydrator, you can use an oven at 140°F (60°C), or spread the ingredients on a screen hung over a hot radiator or woodstove. The resulting powder is shelf-stable and makes an excellent base for soups and stews.

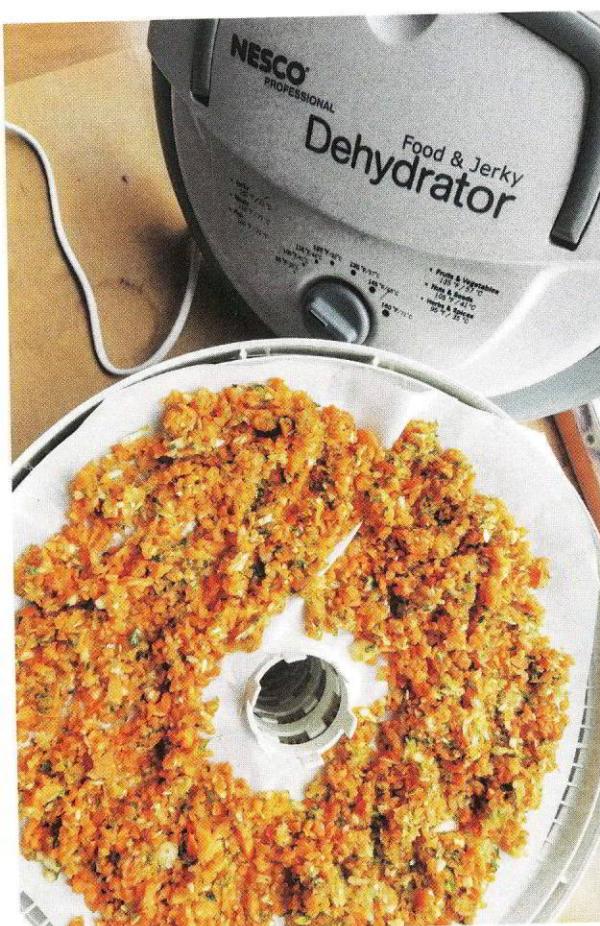
Fruits also dry very well, retaining their nutritional value and flavor. Larger fruits, like apples, peaches, and strawberries, should be thinly sliced and soaked in water with lemon juice before drying. No processing is necessary for smaller berries. Spread the fruits in a single layer in the dehydrator and dry for one to two days or until your desired texture is achieved. Chewy dried fruits retain some moisture content and have a shorter shelf life than crispy dried fruits.

Fermentation

The miracle of lactic acid fermentation is that it is the only food preservation method that actually increases the nutritional value of the food. The vegetables are grated or chopped, combined with non-iodized sea salt, and packed into a tight space with no air. Lactic acid bacteria thrive in the saline environment and multiply, producing lactic acid. The resulting acidity prevents undesirable, pathogenic bacteria from colonizing the food.

Foods made with fermented grains are indigenous to Africa, including *kenkey*, *kunuzaki*, *injera*, *ogi*, and many more.⁹ To make *banku*, a sourdough dumpling from Ghana, place whole maize and salt in a pot and cover with water. Allow it to set for two to three days, then drain the water and blend the maize in a food processor. A thick, pasty dough will form. Roll the dough into fist-sized balls and put them into a pot of boiling water. Cook for 20 minutes and serve with stew. A similar method can be used for any grain or soft legume. When using rice, lentils, or sorghum, the resulting dough is thinner and should be cooked on a hot skillet like a flatbread rather than boiled like a dumpling. Fermented dough keeps in the refrigerator for up to one month.

Fermenting vegetables is also an effective way to preserve the harvest and provide fresh, raw nutrition



Dehydrated vegetables make an excellent bouillon powder for winter soups and stews.

in the winter. The best vegetables for lactic acid fermentation are cabbage, turnips, radishes, carrots, cucumbers, and green beans. Cabbage is the easiest vegetable for beginners. Combine the sliced cabbage with non-iodized sea salt at a ratio of 1 pound (0.5 kg) of vegetables to 1 teaspoon of salt. Use your hands to massage the salt in the cabbage. Let it sit and brine while you sterilize the jars in boiling water. Note that a standard quart-sized canning jar holds about 2 pounds (1 kg) of vegetable. Pack the brined cabbage tightly into the canning jar, pressing out air as you go, so that the cabbage fills the jar up to the bottom of the rim. Then pour the liquid brine over the cabbage to completely fill the jar. Place the lid on very loosely. Arrange the filled jars on a pan and place them at



The author grates cabbage on a mandoline as an initial step in fermentation. Photo by Emet Vitale-Penniman.

room temperature for three days. They will bubble and release liquid as a result of the hardworking bacteria completing the fermentation. Top off each jar with a brine of 1 teaspoon of salt per 4 cups (960 ml) of water. Then place the lids on tightly and transfer the jars to a cool basement or refrigerator. The same method can be used for other vegetables. To jazz up your ferment, try adding garlic, dill, mustard seeds, caraway seeds, juniper berries, or other spices.

Preserving in Vinegar

While vegetables know how to collaborate with bacteria to make their own acid, some people prefer the taste and convenience of pickling vegetables directly

in vinegar. *Pikliz* is a ubiquitous Haitian side, a spicy and sour raw vegetable pickle. In many Haitian homes a jar of pikliz resides on the counter as a permanent fixture. To make pikliz, thinly chop cabbage, carrots, and onions and pack them into a clean glass jar. Add enough distilled vinegar to just cover the mixture. Then add spices to taste: thyme, whole cloves, lime juice, salt, and hot peppers. Cover and shake the mixture and allow it to sit at room temperature for at least three days before consuming. Use a clean spoon each time you remove some pikliz to jazz up your meal. Experiment with other vegetables to make pikliz, especially cucumber, sweet pepper, fennel, radish, turnip, cauliflower, green peas, green beans, cooked beets, or boiled eggs.

Canning

Canning produces shelf-stable vegetables, fruits, soups, and even meats, but requires some specialized equipment. Use brand-new canning jars and lids, as used jars are likely to be weaker and crack. Obtain a large canning pot, canning rack, and jar tongs. While almost any food can be canned, acidic foods are much easier. Our staple canning recipes are tomato sauce and hot sauce.

To make “Soul On Fire Hot Sauce” combine 2 pounds (1 kg) of hot peppers with seeds, 20 cloves of garlic, 1 tablespoon of salt, 9 tablespoons of vinegar, and 9 tablespoons of sugar in the food processor. Cook the mixture over medium heat for about five to seven minutes, stirring frequently. Pour the hot sauce into sterilized canning jars and wipe the rims with a clean towel before putting the tops on. Boil the jars in the hot-water bath for 20 minutes. Remove the jars and place them on a towel. As they cool, the lids will seal, making a *pop* sound and becoming concave. Sealed jars are shelf-stable and can store up to one year.

Similarly, you can make tomato sauce by cooking down tomatoes, onions, peppers, summer squash, basil, and any other vegetables and herbs you have available. Once the sauce loses much of its water and has the desired consistency, add 2 tablespoons of lemon juice or vinegar per quart or liter to ensure shelf stability. Pour the sauce into canning jars and boil in the hot-water bath for 40 minutes.

Freezing

Freezing fruits and vegetables retains much of the flavor and nutrition of the original crop. Fruits, including berries and cherry tomatoes, require no special processing to freeze. Simply spread them out on a tray in a single layer until frozen. Then transfer the fruits into a freezer bag, carefully pressing out as much air as possible. When freezing vegetables, the first step is blanching, which stops the enzyme actions that cause loss of flavor, color, vitamin content, and texture. Blanching also removes bacteria



The author cans tomato sauce under the guidance of elder Mama Isola. Photo by Jonah Vitale-Wolff.

from the surface of the vegetables. Submerge your chopped vegetables in a pot of rapidly boiling water for one to two minutes for tender vegetables like peas and greens or three to four minutes for chunky vegetables like broccoli and cauliflower. Then remove the vegetables and immediately transfer them to ice water. Drain the vegetables and freeze them on a tray in a single layer, then transfer them to a freezer bag. In our opinion, the tastiest frozen vegetables are corn, peas, edamame, and dark leafy greens. Note that you can also freeze, rather than can, sauces, salsas, and pestos.



Our freezer is well stocked with a variety of pestos made from herbs, greens, and garlic. Photo by Neshima Vitale-Penniman.

No Money, No Time

Even for those of us who can navigate the bureaucracy and be approved for government food benefits such as WIC, SNAP, and subsidized school meals, the average benefit is still meager at about \$4 per person per day.¹⁰ Given that commodity foods are subsidized by the USDA, the least expensive options in the grocery store are packed with refined starches and sugar. Systematic shifts are imperative to uproot food apartheid. As we do that organizing work, we can also take immediate steps toward our personal food

sovereignty. In this section we explore strategies for making a dollar and an hour stretch in service of our physical health.

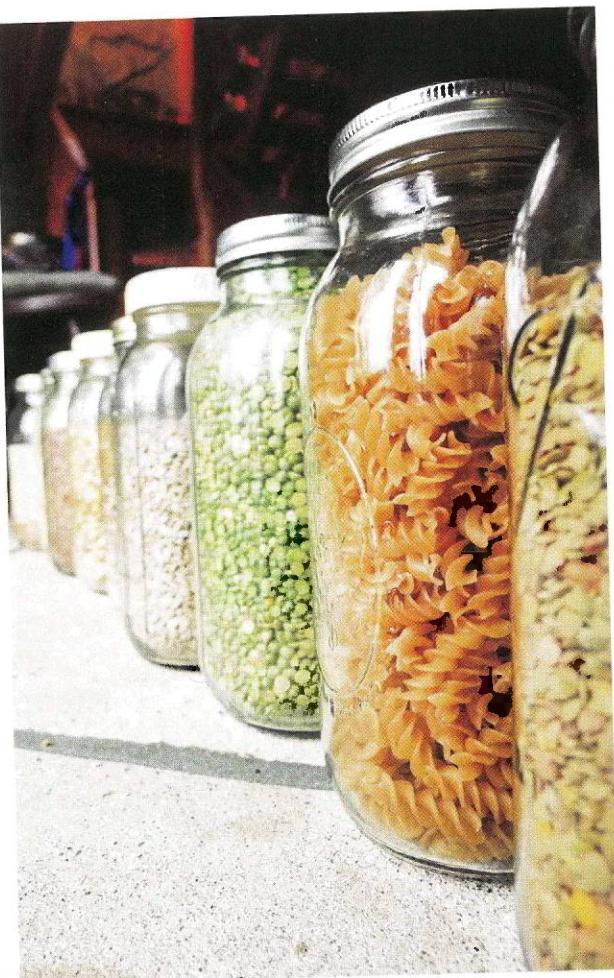
Sunday Soup. Allocating a few hours on a Sunday to make food for the week is an effective time and money saver. Make a big pot of *Soup Joumou*, groundnut stew, curry chickpeas, or vegetable soup plus some rice to store for the next several days. Also on Sundays, soak and boil beans for later use. You can store drained, cooked beans in the freezer indefinitely. While those pots are boiling

My Mother, Reverend Adele Smith-Penniman

Growing up, our family developed an intimate knowledge of the challenges presented by mental illness, substance addiction, unemployment, and violence. My two siblings and I spent our summers and school vacations with our brilliant and beautiful mother, who was often forced by circumstance to receive us in halfway houses or apartments in the projects. Looking back through adult eyes, I can see what a stretch it must have been to care for three children with no reliable income. Yet never, not once, did we go hungry. Our mother made it her number one priority to ensure that there was food on the table and protected us from any worry about scarcity. We offer a low bow of gratitude to Reverend Adele Smith-Penniman and all of the parents whose ingenuity and sacrifice make it possible for their children to be nourished.

on top of the stove, you might as well use the oven to bake some root vegetables as salad toppers or glaze some sunflower seeds to sprinkle on fruit for breakfast. Make extra food and freeze it so you can use it on the days when you really don't have time to do more than heat up your portion.

Power ingredients. There are a few high-calorie-per-penny food staples that are also nutrient-dense. Stock up on these ingredients and use them as the basis for meals. Brown rice, dry beans and peas, oatmeal, sweet potatoes, eggs, and peanut butter are at the top of the list. The following is a complete shopping list for the budget- and

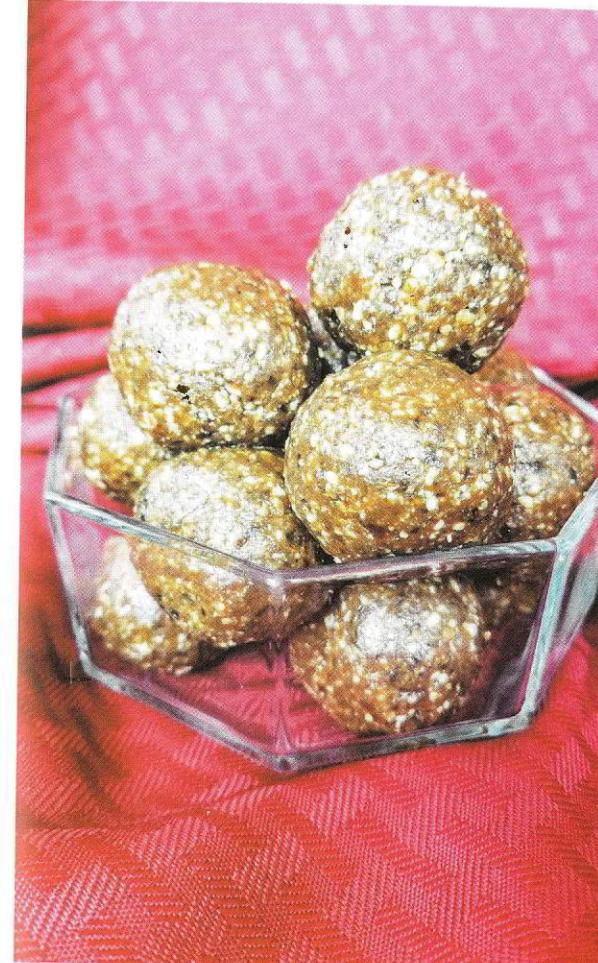


Stock up on dry staple foods as a low-cost foundation for your meals. Photo by Neshima Vitale-Penniman.

health-conscious household. You are more likely to keep costs down if you go to the store with a shopping list and stick to it.

Fruits and vegetables. Apples, bananas, carrots, spinach, potatoes, sweet potatoes, onions, garlic, raisins, and in-season fruits and vegetables.

Oils and spices. Sea salt, vinegar, olive oil, safflower or sunflower oil, baking powder, molasses, tamari, lemon juice, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, cumin, curry, black pepper, chili powder, cayenne pepper, paprika, thyme, clove, and oregano.



These "truffles" made from nuts and dried fruit are an energy-dense, healthy snack.

Grains and flours. Rolled oats, brown rice, whole wheat pasta, whole wheat flour or rice flour, cornmeal, popcorn kernels, corn tortillas, and other whole, unprocessed grains and flours.

Dry legumes and seeds. Black-eyed peas, red lentils, green split peas, garbanzo beans, red beans, black beans, roasted peanuts, coconut flakes, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, pumpkin seeds, and other whole, unprocessed legumes.

Canned foods. Crushed tomatoes, peanut butter, and coconut milk.

Dairy. Milk or almond milk, cheddar cheese, and eggs.

Purchase sparingly. Almonds, walnuts, honey, dates, and coconut oil.

Make processed foods at home. Yogurt, granola, epis, pesto, hummus, salsa, pikliz, salad dressing, cooked beans, and baked goods.

Drink water. All your body needs to stay hydrated is water. Most bottled drinks are packed with sugar and contain no valuable nutrients. To liven up your water, add a splash of lemon or lime juice or a sprig of mint. Alternatively, make tea with fresh herbs from your garden and store it cold in the refrigerator. Our favorite is sorrel tea, mulled with cinnamon and oranges and brightened with a touch of honey.

Carry snacks. We tend to spend money on unhealthy packaged or prepared foods when hunger catches us off guard. Eat before you leave home and certainly before you go grocery shopping. To prevent impulse buys that are hard on your wallet and your health, try carrying these tasty nut truffles on the go. They are packed with protein, vitamins, minerals, and healthy fats.

Nut truffles. Choose your desired combination of nuts, seeds, and dried fruits from the options below. The ratio of nuts to fruit should be 2:1. Blend the nuts and spices in the food processor until floury, then add the fruits and any sweetener. Blend until very fine then add just a dash of water (if needed) so the mixture balls up. Roll into balls or press and cut into squares and coat with grated coconut, crushed nuts, or cocoa powder. Serve immediately or chill.

- **Apple pie.** Walnuts, dried apples, raisins, honey, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger.
- **Cardamom delight.** Almonds, dates, cardamom, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger.
- **Peanuts and chocolate.** Peanuts, dates, raisins, oats, cocoa powder, honey.
- **Fruit pie.** Dried cherries or blueberries, dates, almonds.
- **Carrot cake.** Almonds, walnuts, dates, raisins, grated carrot.