

## The Oil Drum: Campfire

### Discussions about Energy and Our Future

#### On Choosing - A Hyperlocavore Responds to Catastrophe

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This is a guest post by Liz McLellan. Liz is the builder of [hyperlocavore.com](#) a free yard sharing community. After 25 years in the tech field as a user interface specialist and web strategist, Liz moved to the country. She describes herself as farm nerd. She likes to spend her time between gardening, geeking out and community building. Liz started hyperlocavore.com to encourage people to grow food with their friends, family and neighbors in yard sharing groups to build community and food security close to home. She's blogging about the experience of building the site, the community and all her about growing food and tending her beasties. (you can e-mail her hyperlocavore at gmail and tweet her @hyperlocavore...don't forget you can tweet us at @theoil drum !)

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**“Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it!”**

— **Johann Wolfgang von Goethe**

One of the most useful things I have ever learned in my life is that the most effective way to deal with worry and anxiety is to act on those things in your life that you can control, and leave the rest up to the Universe. Some call it the “Serenity Prayer.” Whatever you believe in or do not believe in, knowing just what you can control in your life and what you cannot is the key to your joy. This much I know.

Everyday we are presented with immense immanent rolling overlapping catastrophes, environmental devastation, societal malaise and violence, running out of the stuff that we are told underpins our every creature comfort - oil. All of these things are true. That hand basket you've heard so much about, we riding in it!

How do we “carry on”, as the Brits used to say. Well, I'm not at all interested in “carrying on” actually. Nose down, joy in check, plodding and miserable. I want to thrive. I was raised with mighty high expectations of what this life can be, and I'm not giving those expectations up. I want to reach the top of [Maslow's heirarchy of needs](#). I want to love and live well. And I want to eat REALLY well. I got used to that in the 1990's.

Well, first I would like to suggest some humility, for many on the planet, this rolling crisis has been their daily experience for as long as they have lived. It is nothing new. Check in with yourself. What are you grateful for? What have you been given in life by your community, your family, your beloveds, your friends and your neighbors, by this Earth? You can read this. There must be someone who taught you to read. Take a moment. Sit with your gratitude.

That's where I began when I built [hyperlocavore.com](http://hyperlocavore.com) - a free yard sharing community, sitting with gratitude. I had just been laid off. It was April. I had been a tech strategy person at a 35 year old sustainability non-profit that had been fighting the good fight as long as I had been on the planet. I took an inventory...

OK. Stop. Honestly? I can't lie. First, I felt terror. Then, blind rage with a dollop of total panic. Boiling blood, fist shaking, laying curses on all who had done me wrong - all that. That lasted for a few months, if I tell the truth. Then there was a substantial period of pouting and just feeling so sad for myself. My poor pitiful sorry self. That got old really fast. I bore easily. And I got bored with myself behaving that way, pretty quickly.

When I moved on, it was via gratitude. Sitting with and contemplating all that I was and am grateful for, after all the crying, bargaining and bemoaning had subsided. What did I have, well besides the sweatpants I had been wearing for a few weeks? I am literate and reasonably intelligent, if broke. I have knowledge that people can band together and build [amazing fantastical giant things, cities even](#), because I've been part of a community that does that for more than a decade now. I speak of [the Burning Man festival and year round astounding creative beautiful community made of doers](#). I believe I write well enough.

And I have an good idea that has been bugging me since I was about 5. I used to look at the inside of city blocks in San Francisco and wonder, why the heck were the yards all fenced off, in the middle and mostly unused. Why not, I thought way back then, tear those fences down and build a garden full of fruit trees, nut trees and veggie patches? Why don't people grow food there?

I am grateful that I grew up in the Silicon Valley, a place that fed my voracious curiosity and kept me tinkering. I am grateful for growing up in the Bay Area, a place absolutely crammed with practical minded revolutionaries and doing daring dreamers. The rest of the country seems to think the only thing we gave them was tie-dye and 4 foot bongos, but they would be mistaken. The Bay Area is a place that teaches everyone "Why Not?" A society of people that does not let you just talk about a good idea without telling you, in chorus, to "DO IT!" It is tough to get away with a lot moaning and jaw flapping in a place like that.

[Yard sharing](#) is all about being grateful for what you have, not anxious about what you don't. It's about responding practically to chaos, to the known unknowns and the unknown unknowns. Never in all my life did I think I would quote Donald Rumsfeld but, there you are. These are strange days, indeed!

You do know these things for sure. You know you need healthy food and you know you need it cheap. So do all your friends and neighbors, the members of your faith communities, so does your slacker posse. So does your family. Doing for yourself, deepening your food security and your community resilience is the most direct thing you can do to bring your rational and general anxiety down to a manageable size. Sit down to a meal that you grew yourself from seeds which you saved, bread you baked, eggs you gathered, and you will know in your bones that you and yours will be alright.

We get new people [signing up](#) to the social network every single day, practical people looking to get down to business. I built the site because lots of people don't have all resources or skills they need to grow their own. Some of us lack time, some lack space, some have physical limitations, or lack certain tools. Some have so little experience growing things that the task seems overwhelming. Where do you start? All of these issues can be minimized in a well gathered and

Some folks are linking up yards and [creating mini suburban farm/CSAs, like Kipp Nash in Boulder](#), Colorado. Each family gets a weekly box of the freshest produce and the rest he sells at the farmers market. If this looks like the job for you, come on by the site and find some farm clients and yards to tend! Kipp's got eight yards he is farming. Will you ever look at a lawn again in the same way? When I see a sad lone Honey-Doer on a loud riding mower all I see is wasted space, wasted water and meaningless work.

Green thumbs will appear and share the secrets of plant whispering, food waste will be gathered from multiple households and make a formidable sweet smelling compost pile. [Friends will band together to buy 3 year old apple trees, for a lifetime of apples](#). Abuelitas will pass on magic recipes and kids will coax worms to party in warm living soil. Their curiosity will catch fire! [Streets will become neighborhoods, neighbors will become friends](#). No one will feel alone, frozen or powerless, because no one will be alone, frozen or powerless. Potlucks will abound! All will eat better.

This is the future we see, us hyperlocavores. We know it's coming, because [we're building it right now](#). Who has time to fret? Pass the cornbread and fresh salsa. Look someone brought the boom box!

Our great great grandparents used to have victory gardens but, they also had rent parties. Londoners danced in underground tunnels as fire came down from the sky. They stayed put. They raised rent, barns and kids together. They didn't just survive, many of them thrived. I hope we will all use this compound crisis as a reminder that the hard times are very often the very best of times. Take note of what you have, be grateful for your loved ones. Take note of those around you that may feel alone. They are not and you are not, alone.

We each of us every moment of the day will choose our responses to what's happening. Some will choose to go numb, watch more TV, play more video games, surf mindlessly. Some will chose hate, rage, to nurse grievances and will choose take their pain out on the people around them, the people they love most in this world.

Will you choose another day of fear, of distrust, anger or powerlessness, of envy and isolation or will you choose the plentiful garden, the neighborhood, real community, real food and pleasure?

Yes.

Pleasure.

"There's only two things that money can't buy,  
That's true love and [homegrown tomatoes!](#)"

- Guy Clark

I would add 'real community' to that list of things money can't buy.

I choose real community, dancing in the chaos, pleasure, delectable food and the edible and musical neighborhood.

Happy Digging!



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