

"How quaint," I thought before actually seeing this hive. I imagined something simple. Maybe something Winnie the Pooh would climb up and get his nose stuck into.

"So, Adaline, is it round, hexagon?" I asked. "It's a dodecahedron," explained Adaline.

"A what?"

"A chalice made up of pentagons, with a similar shape turned upside down on top of the chalice to make up the brood chamber, then there are five-sided extensions that stack on top." Adaline had a hive built according to Ron's design and observed her bees gaining strength.

Like Adaline, these new sustainable farmers and gardeners are freer to be innovative again. Without thousands invested in equipment specialized for one specific crop, or fees paid to support large advertising firms that push a crop they are entrenched in, they can change crops, and they can change "equipment," on a summer weekend. The following year, Adaline's carpenter built four more hives.

"We've made a couple of minor alterations to the original design, while trying to stay with the original ideas and intention."

The differences among individual micro eco-farms are many, yet this is their strength. If you are about to become one, you will create something like no other. You may develop a purely vegan farm, supplying those who consume only plant foods with aromas, textures, proteins, micro-nutrients and "life force" in a variety previously unheard of.

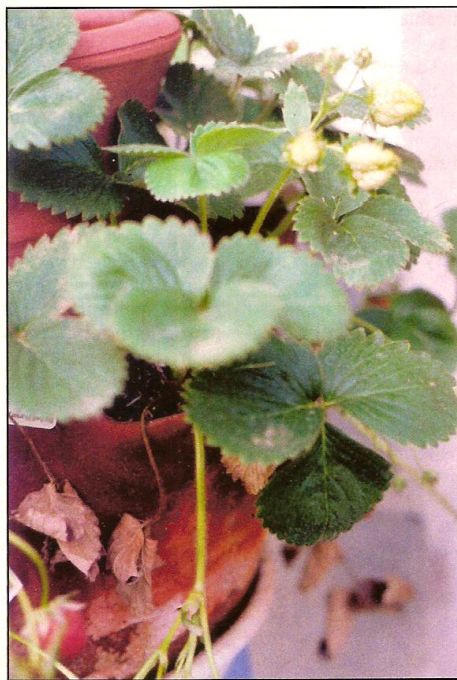
Perhaps you'll operate a "Paleolithic farm," concentrating on nuts, roots, wild greens and other foods humans once consumed before grains became a mainstay. Maybe you'll add wild-grazed fermented dairy products as our ancestors once consumed.

In a world dominated by an oversupply of questionable grains, you may even grow grains. But yours may be pre-industrial grains such as spelt or quinoa, grown organically and intensively for higher production on smaller parcels of land, with the grain stone-ground right after harvest, right on the farm.

In fact, you may even sprout your grain before it becomes bread, turning it back into a "vegetable" rather than a grain, to bake into loaves in your farm's own hand-built brick ovens.

Yours may be one of the only farms reviving food of the Incas, such as ahipa — *pachyrhizus ahipa* — fabales, a legume grown for its sweet, apple crisp roots, or arracacha — *arracacia xanthorrhiza* — apiaceae, which looks similar to celery with uniquely flavored roots, or maca — *lepidium meyenii* — brassicaceae, with tangy, radish-like roots.

Or maybe you'll operate a farm that provides for Italian cuisine chefs, gourmet hobbyists, or local and online ethnic



groups. Your unique herbs and vegetables can't be found in supermarkets. You'll provide those vine-ripened Italian tomatoes even in winter in your 10- by 10-foot greenhouse, while teaming up with a neighbor whose goats fertilize your gardens, and who creates boutique cheeses that complement your Italian sauces sold throughout the winter months.

You may produce products for other farms and gardens: worm castings, heirloom vegetable seedlings, locally-adapted garden flowers, and heirloom seeds, to name a few.

Some farms provide "experiences" even more than products, with a children's pony farm or an herb farm with herb related classes. The selling of experiences works well for those microfarms that attach to larger established businesses such as destination spas, schools, campgrounds or spiritual retreats, which automatically draw in visitors as part of the farm income. However, "microfarms within larger establishments" can also be, well, "microfarms within larger farms."

Theresa and Matthew Freund own a Connecticut dairy farm. When they filled a wagon with their garden's extra-sweet corn on the side of the road, customers stopped to buy, and also asked for lettuce, tomatoes or cucumbers. Following this lead, they planted more of the things they were asked for. Eventually, their farm stand took in \$100,000 over the summer, while Matthew and his brother continued to operate the dairy.

The Friends expanded their roadside stand into a two-story barn-type building offering their fresh produce, dairy products, jams, vinegars, and they even added a U-pick wedding flower acre.

You may be a microfarmer who does not even grow food. Some produce ornamental wheat instead, or herbal goat milk soap, naturally-colored cotton or Angora wool.

"In the U.S., there is a lady who 'paints' pictures using flower petals out of her garden. Another farmer grows seven acres of broomcorn; makes brooms and sells them retail and wholesale," said Ken Hargeshimer, who teaches sustainable mini-farming, mini-ranching and market gardening in the U.S. and worldwide.

"There is a grassroots movement back to family farming," he continued. He has seen for himself what he describes as "free enterprise and micro-entrepreneurship" in both urban and rural environments where mini-agriculture has been proven to produce substantial income on surprisingly small parcels.

"People can have a comfortable income, a high-quality lifestyle, and a great way to raise children," he said. "As well, the micro eco-farm can adapt to year-round work, second-