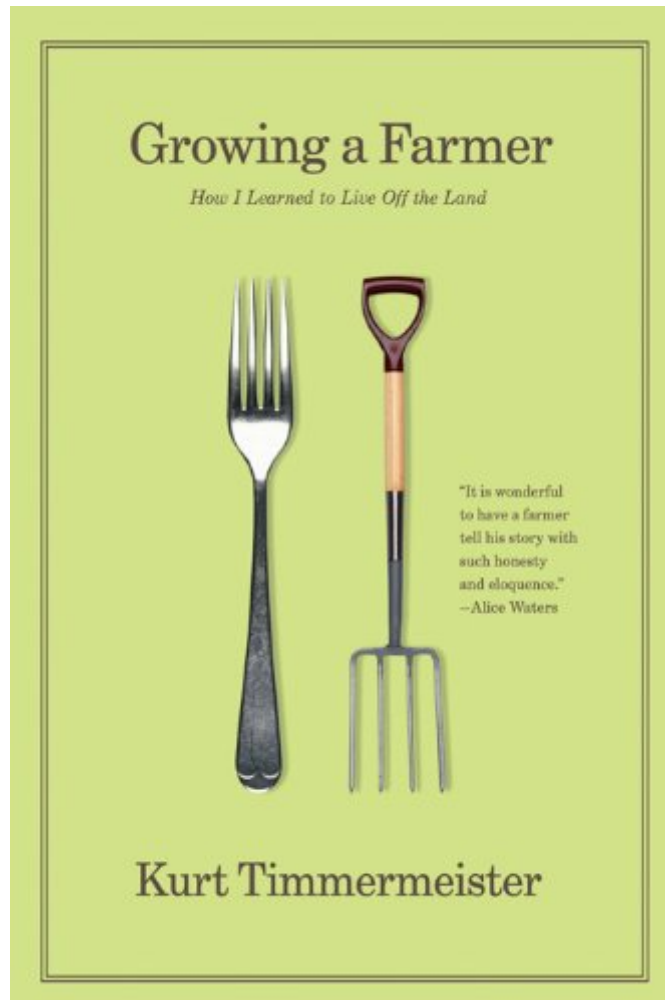




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Growing A Farmer: How I Learned To Live Off The Land



Synopsis

"Charming . . . [Kurt Timmermeister] narrates his personal journey with an open, straightforward spirit." —Wall Street Journal

When he purchased four acres of land on Vashon Island, Kurt Timmermeister was only looking for an affordable home near the restaurants he ran in Seattle. But as he slowly settled into his new property, he became awakened to the connection between what he ate and where it came from: a hive of bees provided honey, a young cow could give fresh milk, an apple orchard allowed him to make vinegar. With refreshing honesty, Timmermeister details the initial stumbles and subsequent realities he faced as he established a profitable farm for himself. Personal yet practical, *Growing a Farmer* will entirely recast the way we think about our relationship to the food we consume.

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Customer Reviews

I have never written a book review, but I felt compelled to do so after reading the author's chapter on beekeeping. I am a second-generation beekeeper, and I am simply appalled by the author's

disregard for his colonies. Take this paragraph, for instance: "Experienced beekeepers are able to keep bees alive year-round, but mine die off when it gets cold." (He's in Seattle, folks.) "Since I enjoy ordering my four boxes of bees at the start of each season, and at \$75 per box they are not prohibitively expensive..." (for him, maybe) "... I've never investigated what causes my bees to perish." (This man cannot call himself a beekeeper. He is clearly just a honey-keeper, someone only in it for what the bees can provide him.) "... Cold is the most likely answer..." (Again, this is the Pacific Northwest, not the Dakotas, where beekeepers frequently manage to keep their colonies alive all winter) ".... It could even be Varroa mites that invade the hive and slowly kill the bees - I really have no idea." This is not good animal husbandry, plain and simple, letting your bees suffer and perish simply because it's easier than working to keep them alive. I will not be reading the rest of the book, and I will not support any of his other publications.

Excellent. Can't say enough great things about this book. A primer about growing food. Not political. Not scientific. Just a wonderful read about the realities of creating a working farm. Granted, I may be biased. It was like reading my own story-- moving onto four unimproved acres and trying like crazy turn it into something useful. Understanding the intricacies of what is behind the obvious was enlightening beyond any expectation. I give a copy of this book to anyone who is planting a vegetable, cares about where food originates, and those who question why I break my back in my garden. Don't hesitate to purchase this book. You won't be sorry.

I found this incredibly interesting on how over time the author grew and changed as he purchased the land, then began becoming responsible for its success, and continued until he felt he was the steward of said land. Beyond that the stories of his successes and failures were quite entertaining.

As someone who grew up in the country and ended up in the city, I have often found myself longing for a bit of land and a large garden, and maybe a few animals. In short, I dream of self-sufficiency. This was a great book because it gave an honest account of the ups and downs that is farm life. I cried when he described having to slaughter his cow. I laughed at his accounts of bee-keeping and honest assessment of his skills as a farmer. However, as a fellow pastry chef, I found that his adoration and appreciation for food to be immediately apparent and I liked him for it. Describing the simple joys of boiling down apple juice for redux, making his own butter, and collecting honey made me remember why I went to culinary school and why I still cook whenever I have a chance. It's important to know what goes in to growing our food and to stop settling on over-processed,

chemically-enhanced junk. I would suggest this book to anyone interested in the Slow Food movement, farm living, or cuisine.

I just finished *Growing a Farmer* and it is on my list as one of my favorites. I enjoyed the writing style and the passion for food interjected throughout the book. There is no doubt the author is also passionate about the land and animals he has to work with. To be honest, I could relate to most of what he went through in the sense that I too would be likely to jump in head first with something like buying land and creating a farm. I can appreciate the fact that he learned the hard way all along the way. While I can appreciate trying to educate oneself before trying something new, there is something to be said for just trying something new and crazy. True, there is a huge risk for loss; however, the lessons learned would be priceless. As for the critics on his beekeeping methods, I can only assume he has addressed the issue with his bees dying each year. If not, it will not stop me from appreciating this book and what he is trying to do on his land. While I do not keep bees, I can accept the fact that there is a learning curve involved with starting a farm. Animals, insects, and plants will inevitably get killed in the learning process. I would rather see some animals sacrificed in the process of achieving the ability to live off the land than have someone not try at all. I would imagine that many beekeepers (or any animal owners) have made mistakes at the beginning while learning the processes required to keep bees. I am supportive of people trying something new, especially when what he or she is trying to do will ultimately help the land and the community in which they live. There is no doubt that his land and community is better off with his efforts than without, even if it comes at the expense of some initial sacrifice. My favorite chapter was the slaughtering of the pigs. I have never slaughtered an animal. The idea of killing an animal I raised does not appeal to me. The respect and passion the author demonstrates for the animal changed the way I viewed the slaughter process. By no means am I now ready to go out and butcher our hens but his passion and respect for the animals are touching. Perhaps I am partial because what the author has accomplished (buying and living mostly off the land) is my dream. Even for those whose dreams vary, I still recommend the book.

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