

2010 Re-skilling Calendar

What is re-skilling?

Our grandparents' generation had a wealth of hands-on skills – everything from raising and preserving their own food to building rainwater capture systems for their homes and gardens. With these skills, they could provide many of their household needs, while purchasing fewer goods and services.

Today, these practical skills are not widely held. Many households are fully dependent on a shaky global economy to provide them with energy, food, water and materials. “Re-skilling” – regaining the basic competencies of prior generations, updated with new technologies and knowledge – is a step toward regaining our roles as producers rather than just consumers.

Why bother?

Grapes from California, toilet seats from China, t-shirts from Malaysia, catfish fillets from Vietnam: The global economy provides most of our goods and services from places far distant from Berea. But the global economy shrank in 2009, and it faces serious threats including:

Peak oil: World production of oil has hit a plateau in the past few years, and will soon begin to decline. Reductions in the supply of the world's most important energy source mean continued shrinkage of the economy.

Climate change: In 1990, most of Kentucky fell within USDA Plant Hardiness Zone 6. Today, the state falls in Zone 7, a warmer climate. This is evidence of a global warming trend that is placing increasing stress on natural systems, agriculture, and economies.

Money and debt: The 2009 U.S. budget deficit will exceed \$1.5 trillion. The U.S. is acquiring debt and producing money at unprecedented rates, threatening the value of the U.S. currency.

No one can predict with certainty the future course of the economy. But given the trends we can observe, building our practical skills, so we can do for ourselves some of the things we currently pay others to do for us, makes good sense.

Why a calendar focusing on food?

In the United States, food travels an average of 1500 miles from field to table, and 10 calories of fossil fuels are used to produce each calorie of food that is eaten. Our food system is highly industrialized and vulnerable to disruptions of the energy supply and economy. If the trucks stop rolling from California to Berea, we are in trouble. Without food, little else matters.

So growing and storing more of our own food makes sense. And the good news is it is fairly easy to do. None of us can manufacture solar panels in our garage, but if we have a yard or a balcony or even window space, we can grow some food. Or we can buy fresh vegetables at the Berea farmers market, can them, put the jars on a closet shelf, and eat well the next time an ice storm shuts down the stores.

And the results go beyond food security. They include fresher, tastier food, better nutrition and health, sharing meals with neighbors, and having fun. Food is a good place to start to build home and community resilience.

Cooking what you grow

Highlighted each month in this calendar is a local recipe suggestion to whet your appetite for more ways to use fresh, local meats and produce. The full length recipes can be found in the new Berea Local Foods Cookbook, published this fall. It contains recipes from the three 100-mile Potlucks that have been held, and sources for the local ingredients used in the dishes. From simple to complex, these are truly local recipes as prepared by your friends and neighbors.



VISION

A vibrant, self-reliant city known for its strong local economy, regional food system, minimal use of fossil fuels, and engaged, skilled citizenry.

MISSION

To increase Berea's resilience – its ability to withstand external economic and environmental shocks – by partnering with other community groups and individuals to re-localize our economy, food system, and energy sources while radically reducing the city's reliance on fossil fuels.

PROGRAMS

Sustainable Berea's members engage in activities to strengthen our households, neighborhoods and community. For example, the Edible Yard Project converts lawns to food gardens and mini-orchards, and Sustainable Berea manufactures and sells at low cost 50-gallon rain barrels and wooden raised bed frames. Other projects promote water and energy conservation, and alternative energy. The Household Resilience Project focuses on actions that individual families can take to increase the resilience of their homes, while Transition Town Berea emphasizes community-wide planning for a future in which Berea not only sustains itself, but thrives.

CONTACT / JOIN

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