

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) Welcome to the old fashioned on purpose podcast. So I hear you, my friends, you have been digging deep into those homesteading blogs and books and videos and your time to finally start. Homesteading is so dang close. You can taste it. You're ready to take the plunge, get the land, or maybe just finally convert your backyard into the mini farm of your dreams. But where to begin? That is the question because homesteading is a huge topic and more than a little overwhelming at times. If you've ever literally asked yourself the question, where do I start with this homesteading thing? Then this is an episode you will love. I'm your host Jill Winger, and for the last 10 years I've been helping people just like you who feel a little bit uninspired by modern life. I'll show you how to leave the rat race and create the life you really want by learning how to grow your own food and master old fashioned skills.
- Speaker 1: [01:18](#) All right, so when it comes to advice on how to homestead, there is tons of information out there. It's not hard to find how. However, what I have found as I've looked through books or YouTube channels or hosting blogs, is that most of this homesteading information is super generic. And personally I have a major beef with fluffy generic information because it does not help anyone. Am I right? So in almost every single interview I've ever done, I get asked one question over and over and over. And that question is where does someone start with homesteading if they're brand new to this whole idea? And so today I wanted to break down my answer to this question into actual tangible ideas and steps. So you can listen to this episode and literally just go into your home and your kitchen and start your homestead journey immediately.
- Speaker 1: [02:33](#) Sound good? Okay. So from a birds eye view, if you're asking yourself, where do I start with homesteading, the answer is always start with the food. So no matter whether we're talking about homesteads in 1880 or 2019 food is the foundation of homesteading past and present. And we can think about the animals that we have on homesteads, gardening, beekeeping, whatever. Almost all the homestead skills you're going to find are related to food in some way, so you, my friend, are going to follow in this same vein, no matter where you live, no matter the size of your homestead, and here's what that looks like. And really, as I really reflected back on my own homesteading journey, even though at the time I didn't really know the path I was on or where I would end up, this is what I followed inadvertently without knowing what I was doing.
- Speaker 1: [03:40](#) As I dove deeper into this homesteading lifestyle, and these are my very best action steps for you as well. All right? Number one,

we're going to start out by cleaning out your cupboards, right? Maybe not what you were expecting me to say, but hear me out. It's going to get better. So I want you to clean out your cabinets and commit to stopping, or at least slowing down how much processed food you consume. Now, I'm not asking you to get rid of every convenience item in your house all at once necessarily, but I'm going to challenge you to pick at least three convenience food that you normally purchased. Let's say, some examples would be canned cream of mushroom soup or boxed macaroni and cheese or refrigerated pie crust or those pop biscuits that scare the crap out of me every time I have to open one.

Speaker 1: [04:44](#) You know those are some examples. I want you to stop buying those three things from the store and learn how to make them from scratch instead. Now as I say this, I want you to keep in mind that there is no shame here. I don't want you to feel bad if you've been eating or cooking a certain way or you know, feel like you're a failure because you're not. We all start somewhere, but this homestead path, we'll start with you examining what's in your cupboard and what you've been eating. Now, some of you are overachievers, which I totally get. And as tempting as it might be to decide you're going to make every item of food your family consumes from scratch, like starting tomorrow, I'm going to recommend that you do take some baby steps and don't try to do it all at once. Speaking from experience here, it can be a little overwhelming and it's a recipe for burnout.

Speaker 1: [05:46](#) If you're going to try to go from eating Rice a Roni to, you know, from scratch sourdough bread in 24 hours, like it's a lot. So take it in steps, take it in stages. I would start by picking the items that you're buying most frequently. Maybe the ones you're spending the most money on, or even the ones that have the most not awesome ingredients in them, you know, the trans fats or the MSG and ditch those first. So a great example of an easily ditchable food would be cream of mushroom soups. Okay. I haven't bought a can of soup in at least a decade. You don't need them. They're easy to replace with homemade substitutes and they have junky stuff in them. So that's a great place to start, for example. But don't try to do it all at once. All right, so step number two, after you start to, clean out some of the process items and make them from scratch, I'm gonna challenge you to start making some swaps.

Speaker 1: [06:58](#) Now this can actually be a little bit easier than step number one. So you're going to still be using a version of the ingredient. You're just going to be using a better version. So example, use butter instead of margarine. Use coconut oil in your baking

instead of Crisco, you guys Crisco is not your friend. Trust me. Use organic unbleached flour instead of the bleached, you know, all purpose flour at the store. Try buying eggs from the farmer's market instead of the ones that come from the factory farms, or try buying local meats from local farmers or ranchers instead of buying the mass produced burger and chickens that you find it your average grocery store. So it takes a little bit of time to find these alternatives, but it's not really difficult because it doesn't necessarily impact your menu or your diet too much because you're still using eggs, you're still using flour, you're still using, fats in your cooking.

Speaker 1: [08:06](#) You're just using better versions of those things. And this is going to help you start to learn where locally you can buy more fresh ingredients or higher quality ingredients. Now, side note, if you live in a more rural area like I do, sometimes finding organic versions or better versions of food is a little more challenging. Believe it or not, when you live in a more populated area, you'll often have more organic food stores or bigger farmers markets and things like that. So it's kind of counterintuitive. You would think rural areas would have more access to fresh foods, but sometimes it's the opposite. So do the best you can. I've been able to usually a combination of growing at myself or getting creative in finding local producers. I'm able to swap out, you know, 95% of what we eat for better options, but I just had to hunt a little bit for some of my sources.

Speaker 1: [09:13](#) And I do purchase things online occasionally. Maybe not the eggs and the milk and the meats, but I do purchase the pantry staples. The more organic or natural options, those are still a little difficult to find locally. So don't be afraid to check out places like thrive market. I can drop a link for them in the show notes. They're my favorite online organic food source. Not, again, not for eggs and meat, but for pantry stuff and spices and flowers and beans and seeds, they're fantastic. Okay. So number three, after you've swapped out some ingredients and found better options to purchase locally, now it's time to figure out what things you can grow or produce yourself. And this is where it gets really exciting because this is what we really associate homesteading as being growing your own food, right? So if you live in town with a small backyard, maybe consider chickens, everybody's favorite or even bees or maybe meat rabbits.

Speaker 1: [10:26](#) If you live in an apartments and you are limited with options, try growing herbs in the window sill or tomatoes in buckets on your balcony. If you have a slightly larger property look into dairy goats or a bigger garden or more chickens, I'm going to bet that

no matter where you live, you can get creative and grow something and you can start by growing the things that you love eating the most and that will kind of give you the most bang for your buck as you work into this idea of home food production. So once you kind of settle on the thing, you're going to grow first, start by mapping out the process of what it will take to implement it and just go one at a time. Again, don't try to do it all at once, but map it out. What will you need to buy?

Speaker 1: [11:23](#)

Who will you need to talk to? Who could you ask for help to venture into this new area and commit to making it happen by the next season. So maybe the season is now, so maybe you can get bees starting like next month. You can order them and get your equipment, or maybe if it's the dead of winter, you're going to have to wait until next spring to start your garden. But put it on your calendar and commit to it. Alright, so step number four, now you're going to take some time to master the cooking techniques for this new way of eating that you have committed to this whole food ingredients, locally grown ingredients. You need to learn how to cook them, right? Because if you're going from a world of hamburger helper and frozen dinners and that's what you're used to buying at the store, and then all of a sudden you're buying bags of potatoes and just simple ingredients.

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Instead, there's a little bit of a learning curve that is required for you to understand how to take those raw ingredients and turn them into food. And something that I joke about with my husband sometimes is when we're tired, you know, it's the end of a long weekend and we don't really feel like cooking. You know, we'll open the cupboards and we're like all we have to eat is ingredients. There's, there's no pre made food, which isn't necessarily a bad thing and there's some work arounds and and cheater shortcuts we do. But it really transitions from when you go to the grocery store, you buy a meal versus now when you go to the grocery store, you're buying ingredients instead. So you've got to understand how to turn those ingredients into things you actually want to eat. And there is a little bit of a learning curve here.

Speaker 1: [13:12](#)

I was not a naturally gifted cook when I started. It took me forever to learn how to cook certain things. Case in point, grass fed meats, Holy moly, I can't tell you how many roasts I made back at the beginning that you had to cut with a serrated steak knife and they would get stuck in your teeth and it was just not delicious. It was not very good. And I had to figure out how to cook them and how to sear them and what temperatures. I got it down now, but it just took some time. Same goes for bread. I

made so many loaves of rock hard bread. That was almost too nasty to turn into breadcrumbs. Like I can't even tell you more than I can count. And then one day as I kept practicing and understanding how yeast worked and how gluten developed in the loaves, it just clicked.

Speaker 1: [14:13](#) So it takes a little time. But if you can commit to learning how to make these whole food ingredients actually tastes good, then you're going to be far more inclined to want to keep growing them. Right? Like here's another example, kind of on the flip side. I don't love beets. They're like kind of a neutral food for me. I don't hate them, but I don't crave them. And I kind of only know one way to cook beets and that's roasting them or boiling them and it's okay. It's just not delicious. And so I haven't put a lot of time or commitment into learning better ways to prepare the beets, therefore I don't really feel motivated to keep growing them, which isn't necessarily a bad thing in and of itself. You don't have to grow every vegetable under the sun, but that same principle applies to other foods you might be producing.

Speaker 1: [15:11](#) So if you can't figure out how to cook that grass fed pastured meat that you raised in your backyard, then it's not going to be very motivating for you to do it again next year. So cooking is crucial in this homesteading experience. It's fun to raise the vegetables and milk the animals and collect the eggs, but you have to know what to do with it. Okay. And then lastly, step number five, once you have learned the cooking techniques for what you're growing, here comes, I think my favorite part of this whole process, and that's learning the more advanced homestead food skills, because you don't have to learn these right at the beginning. These can come a little bit later, but when I say advanced skills, I'm talking things like sourdough bread, kombucha, fermentation, you know, homemade sauerkraut, canning, baking, other types of bread. You know, all those skills that we associate with grandma's kitchen.

Speaker 1: [16:10](#) When you can kind of start weaving those into your everyday modern existence, things get really exciting because you're not only upleveling the health benefits of your food cause we've got probiotics and all sorts of delicious things happening in there. You're also saving more money and it's just really, really gratifying to know how to do this stuff right. So if you're kinda to this step five level, but you're not really sure how to learn these skills, I actually created a course called the heritage cooking crash course that walks you through each of these skills. So I'm going to drop a link to that in the show notes or you can click over to www.heritagecookingclass.com and you

can get the scoop, but basically pick a skill, dive in, keep at it until you're really, really comfortable with it. And then add the next skill. And as you layer them on top of each other, you're gonna eventually wake up one day and you're going to be pretty darn handy in the kitchen.

Speaker 1: [17:15](#)

Okay, so that was steps one through five. That's the path that I went on personally as I started my own homestead journey. And then from that point forward, it's really a process of just continuing to add to your skill collection. And that's how I really view this whole thing. It's building a repertoire of skills. And of course the path won't be the same from person to person. And you might skip some things that I did and you might add something in earlier, totally fine, but you'll know when to tailor the steps in the food production and the skills to what you're doing in your unique experience. So when I was in high school, I'll never forget this, a mentor suggested that I make a list of all the things I wanted to learn and experience, like as I went into college and as I left home.

Speaker 1: [18:15](#)

So I did, I made this mental list of the things I wanted to do. And that idea of a goal list of skills or experiences has really always stuck with me. And that's what I've done inadvertently as we started our homestead path was I made this list of skills that I wanted to conquer, right? Things from, you know, learning how to grow tomatoes without having a disaster to milking a cow, to actually baking edible bread or making soap. These were all things that I had on my list and I have gradually checked off over the years. And you know, I honestly, I take a lot of pride in that. I love knowing how to do stuff. I think it feels good, it builds confidence and it really just makes us more well rounded. So I encourage you to make your own skill list and start checking it off.

Speaker 1: [19:13](#)

And there's plenty of ways to accomplish that. You know, there's so much information out there right now, it's for free, right? Libraries and YouTube and Google and blogs. You can learn how to do a lot of things and you don't necessarily have to have, you know, a best friend to show you. You can kind of do it on your own. So there's no reason you can't create that list and start checking things off left and right. All right, so we're wrapping it up. The biggest takeaway I hope you leave this episode with is that we can make the plans, we can make the lists, we can listen to the podcast and the YouTube videos with all the suggestions, but you have to take action at some point. Action cures fear. It's one of my favorite quotes and it's not just a cute little bumper sticker saying it's a real thing.

Speaker 1: [20:11](#) Action cures fear. So planning and preparation is totally fine and actually a really good idea, but you can really easily get stuck in that mode of preparation. Preparation, Oh, I'll be ready next year, I'll be ready in five years. And at some point you have to take the plunge because learning something new or trying something new is hardly ever easy. Like I can't think of one thing I've done new that was comfortable and I just like naturally was good at it at the beginning. Like I had to feel uncomfortable like a bumbling idiot for a good while before it became second nature. And if you're waiting for it to be comfortable before you start, you'll be waiting in an eternity, right? Cause it's not gonna be comfortable. You just gotta do it. So take the plunge my friend. You will be glad you did. So as you learn these skills and as you start your homestead journey, if you need a little extra encouragement and advice from someone who's been there, done that.

Speaker 1: [21:18](#) I'm your girl. I have an entire library of resources I've put together for homesteaders just like you. And you can get complimentary access to it at theprairiehomestead.com/grow one more time. I'll say it, theprairiehomestead.com/grow. Okay, my friend. I have some good news for you. You are not a weirdo. It feels good to hear that, right? But if you have had these strange urges to make yogurt or to culture buttermilk, or to try your hand at some homemade mozzarella, well you're in good company. The tough part is that sometimes it's almost impossible to find home dairy supplies locally, which is why I have come to rely heavily on the new England cheese making supply company. They are my absolute lifeline for everything I need to make all the dairy stuff in my kitchen from cultures to equipment to supplies they've got it, and to make your life easier, I've put together a free quick start guide that includes not only my favorite home dairy recipes, a list of the cultures that I use the most, but we put a little discount code in there for you as well. Head over to theprairiehomestead.com/cheese to check it out, and that's it for this episode. If you liked what you heard and it gave you some ideas, I would be so honored if you jump over to iTunes and leave a quick review so more homesteaders can find this podcast. Thanks for listening and I'll chat with you next time on the next episode of the old fashioned on purpose podcast.