



# News from Peef & Lo

## SPRING CLEANING:

## NEW Adventures in the Cliché

There's nothing like a good old-fashioned bout of spring cleaning.

A task dating back to the days when streets were unpaved and littered with manure ... and coal stoves and oil lamps filled homes with soot and ash... spring cleaning has a sordid reputation as an "abomination of desolation" that "breaks women's backs and causes men to break the Ten Commandments."

Oh, alright. We've got it good these days. Our houses get dusty. Our windows need to be washed. But we don't have to deal with half the dirt and grime inside of our homes that people did years back.

On the OTHER hand, maybe it's the insides of our bodies that have a tendency to get covered in soot in this day and age. All the pollution in the air and the additives in our food... maybe all of THAT adds up to something that really ought to be cleaned out. Don't you think?

Well, we really got to thinking about that this year. About all of the toxins and preservatives and additives and JUNK that they ingest all year long... never really thinking about it. It started off with an article from Natural Health magazine about doing a spring cleanse (detoxification). The idea was intriguing... and it didn't look impossible.

So, we headed off to the store to find schisandra, milk thistle, flax oil, green foods, dandelion tea... We set the date for April 1st — and vowed to spend an entire weekend clearing our system of toxins. Not only would we be flushing ourselves with plenty of fluids, but we'd be taking a

break from caffeine, alcohol, and everything artificial.

In preparation, we stocked our fridge (and kitchen counter) with more produce than we thought two people could ever eat. We bought stock in a lemon grove. And we filtered water for hours.

Ultimately, the day came. That fateful Friday when we gave up our souls for 72 hours and gave birth to what we hoped would be a brand new life.

We spent the weekend in a healthy "zone". We took tinctures and supplements (and even suffered through the pain of sipping flax oil... the worst of it all). We ate things like steamed beets and beet greens, asparagus, collards, kale, and spinach. We noshed on carrots and ate meager portions of steamed fish and hummus. We also drank tea, lots of water, and did a bit of yoga. In between those things, we thought a lot about changes that might/could be made to our diets and our lives. We had bouts of hunger (and a few headaches here and there), but we took naps when we needed to and tried to keep our systems full of veggies. We took walks around the neighborhood to take in the fresh air. And we trimmed a few of our bushes in the front yard as well.

By Sunday, we were craving carbohydrates pretty badly. Lo would have given her eye teeth for a noodle. And all Paul wanted was a bowl of brown rice. But we held our ground. We drank more herbal tea and

took mineral baths.

And when we woke up from the dream, it was Monday. We blinked our eyes and pinched ourselves — just to make sure it was real. But it was true. We were free to eat again.

The funny thing about waking up on that fateful Monday is that grocery shopping was NOT the first thing that we did. Instead, we finished cleaning out the upstairs closet.

It's also NOT true that we ran to the nearest McDonald's for our first fat-laden meal. We had fruit for breakfast. And it felt good.

We did feel a bit like a couple of hippies who had just spent a number of days getting in tune with nature. Or something. As Paul put it: "I feel very... granola." And that granola feeling hasn't really gone away.

The truth of the matter is that the spring cleanse DID make us both feel better. We were full of energy. Freed from the need for caffeine. And excited about getting back into the pith of life.

We didn't expect drama to unfold over the next few days. But, in a sense, it did. Sure, we've gone back to having a glass of wine with dinner. And we can eat risotto again. But some good stuck.

We drink a little less coffee. We don't crave sugar. And we kept doing yoga. Heck, we even decided to keep taking the evil flax oil... cuz... well, it's good for us.

(spring cleaning information derived in part from the book: "Never Done: A History of American Housework" by Susan Strasser)

## The Saga Continues...

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### IF YOU'RE NOSEY...

#### WHAT's on PEEF AND LO's NIGHT TABLE?

- *THE MESSAGE: Remix* (Bible in Contemporary Language) by Eugene Peterson
- *THE VILE VILLAGE* (A Series of Unfortunate Events: book six) by Lemony Snicket
- *NEW BRAND WORLD* by Scott Bedbury (for Lo's class)

#### WHAT's NEW in their CD player?

- *KNUCKLE DOWN* by Ani DiFranco (2005)
- *EDUCATED GUESS* by Ani DiFranco (2004)
- *TRADITIONS IN TRANSITION 3*—the new JAZZIZ CD
- *HOT FUSS* by The Killers
- *FRANZ FERDINAND* by Franz Ferdinand

### Inside this issue:

SPRING CLEANING	1
AND the Garden...	2
Tribute	2
Cabbage is Better than Love	3
Perfect Time of the Year	3

# And Then There is the Garden...

You know how excited we get around mid-March when the snow begins to show some sign of melting... and the sun looks as if it just MIGHT begin to stay out later and longer.

We get the gardening bug. And we get it badly.

This year, we've gotten started early. We've begun working to clear the leaves out of our flower beds. We've turned the compost pile over a few times, just to make sure that it starts "cooking" again. And we've started on the everlasting chore of pruning our bushes back into shape.

Last weekend, we spent Saturday hauling dirt, compost, and humus around the yard — filling up the raised beds, amending soil in some of the flower beds, and generally trying to get everything ready for the moment when the vegetable seeds have matured and my perennials arrive from the nursery.

But it's tough to wait. April in Wisconsin is merciless. The weather warms to the point that the HOPE really starts flowing. But then, one day, you wake up and it's 35°F again — and maybe even flurrying. It isn't until mid-May that one can REALLY begin to feel as if the growing season has begun.

And still, we find ways to get through. Ever since January, we have been poring over nursery catalogs and making up wish lists. This year, the wish lists were based on our plans for our flower beds— both in front of the house and in the back.

And this year, we took the time to actually place orders from a couple of our favorite

catalogs. For one thing, we decided it was time for us to plant roses.

Yes, we're being brave. We're going to buckle down our little organic thumbs and rage against threats like black spot. We're going to bring forth our pruning shears and put on our thorn-proof gloves. And yes, we're going to try this on for size.

We've picked out three beautiful varieties of roses — two yellow, one orange, and a lovely pinkish color. They have cool names like Maria Stern and Helen Hayes. The pink one is "Senior Prom"... which makes me smile. Lo was never enough of a girl to want a pink rose bush, even in high school. Even for prom. But look at her now... fawning over a pink rose!

The fun thing about the roses is that we ordered them from a nursery in Missouri. They are beautiful, healthy bare-root roses. But the kicker is, they arrived in mid-April. The ground was still frozen. I called customer service... were they NUTS? We live in Wisconsin. The ground is frozen. We cannot DIG. They assured us that we could keep them for another couple of weeks, but that April is a fine time to plant roses... even in Wisconsin.

Well, April might seem a bit early for roses. But it's a perfect time for seed-starting. We started flats of vegetable seeds during our detox the first weekend of the month. And, by now, most of them have a fine set of true leaves and have been moved downstairs underneath the grow lights. This year, we ordered quite a number of seeds from SeedSavers Exchange in Iowa, with the goal being a garden composed primarily of heirloom



varieties. Tomatoes, tomatillos, peppers, squash, beets, beans, and kale. We're going to grow cool things like DRAGON TONGUE beans — which are cream colored, with gorgeous, unexpected purple spots (sadly, the purple color fades when you cook the beans — but they're great fun for eating raw!). We can't wait to plant hills of stark white scalloped squash. And we're terribly excited about the prospect of PURPLE RUSSIAN tomatoes — which are the prettiest color you can imagine. We'll also be growing medium-hot Hungarian peppers that start out as a lovely black color and ripen to a gorgeous red.

Fine. Fine. You go and make fun of us. We understand that many people live happy and fulfilled lives without ever getting excited about summer squashes in non-traditional colors. There are people who, frankly, don't give a hoot if their bush beans are scarlet, purple or ordinary green beans. There are even people who use jarred garlic and bottled lemon juice, and they're decent human beings. Some of them even make and eat good food. Some of them are my friends.

So, make fun if you must. We'll get through. And if you ever have the urge to eat Dragon's Tongue beans — well, I guess you know where to find them.

## A Short Tribute

Sometimes spring brings more than just an urge for spring cleaning. Sometimes it brings a strange and untimely reminder about how short life really is... and how important it is to live every moment.

Lo's aunt Kathy passed away on March 19th this year at the age of 50. After a long, courageous battle with lymphoma— Kathy became a shining example of what it means to live and die in faith.

Peef and Lo mourned equally at the loss. For Peef — it was the loss of a woman who had become a great friend and confidante... a member of Lo's family who embraced him immediately and made him feel a part of the family, even before he was *officially* part of it.

For Lo, it was the loss of an aunt of whom

she had decades of fond memories — a woman who was always willing to share anything that she had, and who never failed when it came to bringing something goofy to the metaphorical table.

Kathy was a small person. But she had a big heart.

When it was cold outside, Peef and Lo spent long hours visiting in family room — sipping cups of coffee and commiserating about the ups and downs of life.

When the weather was favorable, Kathy loved to work in her yard, and she was always busy tuning up her lawn mower, tending her lilacs, or doing "crazy" things like waxing her Weber grill. She loved to fish—and she always had a story about her adventures on the lake.

You might remember a story last spring about the lilac bushes that Kathy gave to Peef and Lo to put in their back yard. Well—this year, those bushes are a little bit more special. Bushes that only one month ago looked like a patch of dead sticks are now filled with buds and blooms, and will soon be covered with the fullness of spring. As the warmer weather approaches, they're a symbol of something bigger than the two of us. Life BEYOND understanding. Life more powerful than death.

So, here's a small space ... in a small publication ... devoted to a woman with a big heart, and an even bigger presence.

# CABBAGE IS BETTER THAN LOVE

When we're not cleansing, we're generally keeping still eating plenty of cruciferous veggies... the main difference being, they're not simply and steamed. They're a bit more complicated.

OK — so maybe the headline is an overstatement. But if you've spent your life thinking that cabbage is a sulphurous, sorry excuse for a cruciferous vegetable, you really need to take a step back and try this recipe. Not only is it TOO SIMPLE for words, but it's positively delicious. And it comes in terribly handy during those spring months when comfort food is still a necessity.. And green cabbage is an absolute steal at \$0.50/lb.

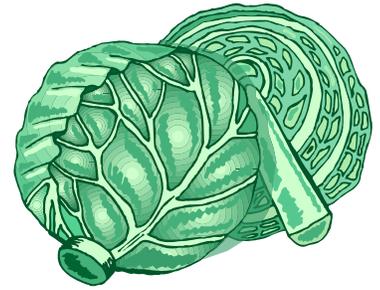
Of course, you have to have an affinity for cabbage that is sweet and melt-in-your-mouth tender. And you've gotta fall swooning upon the heels of a caramelized onion. And maybe, just maybe, you have to have an unnatural affinity for paprika. Or have an ounce of good, Polish blood in you.

Whatever the case, this is one of the dishes that put cabbage on the map in our house. And it won't make your house wreak. I don't recall that it made our kitchen any smellier than usual... unless we just didn't notice because we were too busy enjoying our fabulous dinner.

## BETTER THAN LOVE:

### Slow Cooked Cabbage and Noodles

- 1/4 cup butter
- 2 cups onions, thinly sliced into whatever shape you like
- 8 cups cabbage, very finely chopped (think coleslaw)
- 1 1/2 T paprika, preferably Hungarian half-sharp
- 2 tsp salt
- Ground black pepper
- 12 oz medium or wide egg noodles
- Dollop of sour cream



Melt butter over medium heat in a large pan with a tight-fitting lid. Add onions and sauté until golden (about 15 minutes). When onions begin to caramelize, add paprika, stir well, and cook for a few more seconds.

Add cabbage and sauté for five minutes, stirring occasionally.

Cover and cook cabbage for 40-60 minutes, stirring occasionally, until reduced and browned (the longer you cook it, the sweeter it will become).

During the last 10-15 minutes of cooking, boil water and cook egg noodles. When noodles are cooked, drain well and add to cabbage mixture with liberal sprinklings of ground black pepper. Stir thoroughly. Serve adorned with heavenly dollops of sour cream.

(Inspired by a recipe from the MOOSEWOOD collective)

This is also perfectly lovely WITHOUT noodles as a side dish. And, if you MUST have meat (and I know that some of us really must), you can pair it with some kielbasa. Or better yet, some great garlicky polish sausage.

# That OH-SO Perfect Time of the Year

We always forget what happens to our kittens in the spring of the year. How they suddenly POUNCE back to life just as soon as we open our windows. And how the back door again regains its appeal as the favored escape hatch into the mysterious outside world.

We tend to forget that Elmo has vowed to make at least one pilgrimage to the Holy Land before he is whisked off like Elijah into the heavens. We tend to ignore the obvious signs — the suspicious restlessness, the whining at the back door, the overnight bags stashed in out-of-the-way corners.

And I think we tend to get a little bit overconfident of our collective ability to outsmart the two felines living under our roof.

The truth is, they're both terribly clever. Especially in the spring when nature seems to SCREAM out to them in a

particularly irresistible tone.

We haven't had our windows open too many times yet this year (it's still a little bit chilly around here). But on a select few occasions, we've taken to getting a bit of fresh air rolling in... and the cats have gone absolutely NUTS.

Elmo has taken to acquiring super-feline strength from somewhere and has been known to take extraordinary leaps up into the air and across vast countertops of dirty dishes to get to the kitchen window above the sink. Zoë has begun chattering incessantly at birds — whether the windows are opened OR closed. And we've come home twice now to find our papa san chair in the turret carelessly overturned, a plant or two tossed carelessly askew, piles of dirt on the floor, and the cats staring off as if they didn't have a THING to do with any of it.

But it's not only those typical cat things that we're beginning to notice. This year, the cats seem to have outside contacts working in their favor as well.



There are an extraordinary number of birds hanging out in our back yard this year — whole TROOPS of blackbirds, that seem to swarm here and there... inviting Zoë out to play. And that storm window in our turret — the one that was thoughtlessly broken a few weeks ago by a neighborhood soccer ball ... is beginning to look a little bit suspicious. as well.

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## The Saga Continues...

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AMOR SITIS UNITI

