

Fear, Necessity, Economics and the Future

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Why Food is Such an Important Resource and the Nourish Learning Lab



Food from PAST Foundation collected intentionally for the chickens so it doesn't go to waste.

Important things in life are rarely ever motivated by just one thing; it's usually a constellation of things. Fear, Necessity, Economics and the Future those motivate and inform me.

That is nature's way as well. People ask me all the time why I

am so dedicated to Urban Farming and living as ecologically stable as possible and to not wear them out, I will give them one answer.

For me, it's the right thing to do, but it's deeper than that. For me living sustainably on an urban farm like Mezzacello is motivated by fear, necessity, economics, and reason. I want to just briefly go through these four topics.

Jim Bruner

When I was a child, I lived in a very unstable home with a mother who was mentally unstable and a drug addict. One of her idiosyncrasies was a paranoia that people were stealing from her. I can only guess at this, as I was just a kid at the time and I never asked her explicitly.

In a fit of mania one day, she took all of the food from the cupboards and locked it in her room with her. She rarely came out, we rarely saw her. My sister and I survived by the grace of public school lunches and summer programs where we would be sure to eat at least once a day.

Oftentimes one of my other family members would bring us food, but I have a clear memory of not eating for a few days. That sticks with you, and you never shake it. Even when you have resources, there's a scar and it's a motivator.

Hence Mezzacello Exists

It's a comfort to me to live in a place of plenty. Hence Mezzacello, my Urban Farm exists.

[It's also true that I have survived a catastrophic medical condition which ended with me losing my esophagus and having my stomach rebuilt to serve as an esophagus.](#) If you know me then you know this is true. As a result, I CANNOT eat easy, processed food.

It is literally poison to me. If I do, I lose all the nutrients in my body in a condition called "[Dumping Syndrome](#)" and it's essentially the same as going without eating for three days. Therefore, I have a direct need to eat fresh food.

Fresh Food Is Expensive

But fresh food is expensive. and I want to make sure my diet is as varied as possible, Meat, eggs, fish, insects, vegetables and whatever else I can grow to offset those costs. I grow as much as I can, Learning as I go. Feeling and learning from each failure from a sense of hope, loss, and fear. Hence Mezzacello exists.

In order to sustain our global population, we need to change the culture of how we interact, use, grow, transport food. My first instinct is to act. My second instinct is to teach.

That is why Mezzacello has such a strong educational flavor. We all of us can do this; it will require compromise and work, yes. But those are better than misery and starvation any day. Trust, me I know. Hence Mezzacello exists.

But a life of all work and no play is not a life worth living either. That's why Mezzacello is also a formal garden; Beauty is food for the soul. I live in a beautiful park filled with order and overlapping enclosed ecosystems that bring me peace and joy, and indirectly make the world a better place. That's Rick's doing. But my systems and inputs enable it. Mezzacello is a model urban enclosed ecosystem. It's not perfect by any means, but it's my imperfect dream. It feeds my body, it feeds my soul, it fuels my purpose. Hence Mezzacello exists.

PAST Foundation and SOIL Project

Finally, many of you know that in 2014 I started working with an educational non-profit called The PAST Foundation [www.PASTFoundation.org]. It was a life changing experience for me. I have worked in the education space since 1996.

With PAST I found an organization that really does seek to change the world of education through hands-on learning. I served as project manager for an ambitious grant to create nine outdoor innovation learning labs around Ohio.

The lessons I learned facilitating that grant kicked my passion to make Mezzacello a success into overdrive. I applied all those techniques, technologies and insights into my infrastructure.