

# A River Ran Through It; Alum Creek, Kerr Mill, and a Farmhouse

This house will be 155 years old this year. A quick history of the house and the land around it.

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## The New Neighbor Who Has 100 feet

Well year two of #ProjectMartian has been a learning experience to be sure! My original idea was to test if we could send greens and browns to Mars to recreate compost and soil on Mars (we can). But I neglected one key plot point; Life will stow away. To cut corners this busy year I added horse manure ([The Manure that Infected Mars](#)) and I forgot that there would be organisms that would come with that UNPROCESSED material. Well, I only needed to learn that lesson ONCE. I have been turning the soil, allowing the chickens and ducks into the Martian Garden beds (They love centipedes and pill bugs) and using a flamethrower occasionally – think Ripley from “Aliens”. I say to those centipedes near my tender shoots – “Get away from her you bi...” well, you get the idea. But the real secret – ironically is the diatomaceous earth (Martian Regolith) is the best answer. So I will be applying DE and Borax and making life very hard for these Earth-based composters. Stay tuned!

I let the chickens eat more than I destroyed with fire. Full Disclosure. I will post the Chicken and Duck #FeedingFrenzy

next, I promise.

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# The Manure That Infected Mars

#ProjectMartian really worked well. Especially during the COVID19 isolation. Last year every bit of manure and green and brown for compost went through the #Bioreactor. I was mocked for using it. I was chastised for calling it that. But it did work. This year I used compost from the bioreactor in all of my 24 garden beds. But in eight of them I got cocky and amended the beds with horse manure. That was a good idea in theory except for one important fact; there was life in the manure. Bugs and weeds to be exact. I placed a layer of diatomaceous earth on every bed as a last step. In the outside manure beds, the life came from below the layer of diatomaceous earth. The system worked perfectly when I used "Eden's Ghost" and just compost from the bioreactor. I was stunned to find all these weeds beneath the burlap today.

This is the design cycle in action. This is a failure that is going to drastically curtail my productivity. Along with the weeds came a whole class of pill bug and centipede that LOVE rich, wet, dark, organic environments. And now I have to sterilize the top 6cm of the infected beds. But I learned a valuable lesson; on Mars you have to use what you have. Had I stayed true to that mission I would not have discovered this flaw in my system. Lesson learned. Cook all manure before you add it to a #ProjectMartian bed. I am glad I learned this here and not on Mars.

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# **The Rule of Sustainability – 3 and 5 Strategy**

Sustainability is an important topic right now. We need more of it, and better metrics to define what “it” is.

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**The Foodist: Big Mom’s Pan-Seared Potatoes, Onions, and Kale**

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Rick's mother's 13" cast iron skillet with potatoes, onions, parsley, and kale from Mezzacello.

This is a terrific recipe Potatoes Lyonnaise with a twist for a winter night. Simple, warm, filling, crunchy and tasty. Rick made this Cook's Country-inspired dish in his beloved mother's fabulously seasoned, well-used, and much beloved large cast iron pan.

The recipe is deceptively simple. The ingredients were all locally grown and ready for use either from the root cellar or the freezer.

The trick is in understanding the relationship between heat,

water content and timing. Also, a big shout out to Helen Riley (AKA Big Mom) for the lovely gift of this well seasoned pan!

## **Ingredients:**

- 4 Russet potatoes, peeled and sliced into 1/2' slices
- 1 onion, sliced into strips
- 2 cups of chopped kale (frozen is fine)
- 2 Tbsp diced parsley
- 2 Tbsp oil
- 2Tbsp butter
- 1 tsp caraway seed ground
- Salt and pepper

## **Directions**

1. Prepare the ingredients for adding to the pan.
2. Add oil and butter into the cast iron pan and heat it up.
3. When the pan is hot add the potatoes, spreading them around the pan to sear both sides.
4. Cover the potatoes while they are searing and steaming!
5. Remove potatoes if you must to make sure that all get a decent sear on both sides. Be sure to cover the pan.
6. Keep the potatoes warm, you'll be adding them back in the pan.
7. Add the onions and cook until they just start to sweat.
8. Add the ground caraway seed in the pan.
9. Return all the potatoes to the pan. Allow the potatoes and onions and caraway to cook down together.
10. Add the kale in at the end to a hot skillet. The kale will crisp up quickly.
11. Add salt and pepper to taste.
12. Garnish with the parsley.
13. Serve immediately and enjoy.

Serves 4-6 people

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# Spring 2021 and the Brunerform

An update on the gardens this spring and a candid little confessional and observation on Spring, Beauty, Life, and Fashion.

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## Giving Back to Sustainability for Lint

Four years ago we decided we were to dedicate our efforts across all domains to sustainability. We refer to it as an enclosed Sustainable ecosystem network. There are many pathways that enable and insure those networks remain viable and renewable. This requires that we reframe waste. Not as an inconvenience or troubling afterthought; but as a valuable resource. This is one of the most valuable waste streams at Mezzacello. Humble lint.

We pull it off our clothes, linens and rugs. We used to throw it away. But then I saw the multiple functional pathways lint could be useful for:

1. birds nests
2. holding moisture in potting soil
3. carbon in compost
4. catching and housing algae and microbes in the biofilter
5. bedding for baby chicks
6. bedding for baby rabbits

- holding water safely for crickets
- 7. great padding on hangers
- 8. holding peanut butter and lard for suet
- 9. helping seeds thrive as it holds water and fertilizer close to the seed
- 10. creating sachets to keep moths away in closets, especially when you add cedar oil and lavender

There is more I am sure. I haven't encountered it yet. What would you use lint for? Share it with me. Make me better!

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## The Foodist: Rabbit Pot-Au-Feu

Pot-au-Feu is usually made with two cuts of beef and lots of fresh herbs and vegetables. We have lots of the latter but no beef; we raise rabbits. So rabbit it is! I love this in the fall and winter, we love it with fresh herbs and vegetables so it needed to be a summer meal – But I can use the root cellar vegetables and herbs that I dehydrate and store. So we are adapting as we go along.

### INGREDIENTS

- 5 sprigs of parsley
- 2 sprigs of thyme
- 1 large bay leaf
- 4 large leeks
- 4lbs of rabbit (a whole rabbit)
- 2 cups beef broth
- Rabbit Kidneys, liver and chicken liver, quartered

- 1 small head of cabbage cut into 8 wedges
- 4 large carrots cut into quarters
- 2 medium purple turnips peeled and quartered
- 2 large cloves garlic, peeled and crushed
- 1 large yellow onion
- 4 medium Yukon gold potatoes peeled and halved
- 8 toasted pieces of crusty bread
- 1/4 cup Dijon mustard
- Salt and cracked pepper

1. Tie the parsley thyme and bay leaf together in a 10" square of cheesecloth with string. This is your bouquet garni.
2. Place rabbit but not organs in a 10-12 quart dutch oven and cover with 1" of cool water. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat.
3. Fill an additional 6-8 quart pot with salted water to a boil. Add the cabbage in and boil for 3 minutes. Drain and set aside.
4. Skim the fat from your boiled rabbit. Add the bouquet garni, leeks, cabbage, carrots, turnips, onions, garlic and 2tbs salt. Add beef broth and enough water back to the pot to cover the vegetables. Return to a boil.
5. Skim the water again after the boil. Turn the heat down to low and partially covered. Cook at a simmer. Continue to remove fat occasionally.
6. The rabbit will take a few hours to cook. Remove the vegetables as they cook. Set the vegetables aside after they cook.
7. Boil the potatoes for 20 minutes. Drain and set aside.
8. Remove the rabbit from the broth and set aside. Cover with foil.
9. Feed the the bouquet garni to the chickens. Add the organs, vegetables and potatoes to the broth over medium heat. Heat them through.
10. Serve up mugs of broth. Add the Dijon mustard to 1 cup of broth. Use this to spread on your bread. Spread half



on the platter you will be serving the Pot-au-Feu on.

11. Transfer the vegetables to a platter. Plate the rabbit. Pour enough broth over the dish to add a shallow pool of broth. Add Salt and Pepper over the dish.
12. Serve.

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## The Aquatic Ecosystem in 2021

It's winter, 2021. This is the fourth winter in the aquatic ecosystem for the fish at Mezzacello. If you're not familiar, [start with this nightmare](#) or [this](#), or [this](#). I have busted my gluteal muscles trying to learn what Mother Nature needs to create a #Sustainable aquatic ecosystem and make it manageable for a 21st Century life style. It has been a rewarding journey. So much #Physics #Biology #Chemistry #Ecology #Hydrodynamics #Stats #Mathematics #Topology #Geometry and #Legal issues. All of this. From having the police called on me for digging a six foot grave, to mastering hydrology and pump technology and #Backup Systems to the magic of getting handwritten poems in the fence written by neighborhood kids. This particular ecosystem at Mezzacello has been a wonderful journey. Recently I went out and looked into the clear 1.7m abyss at the perfectly content fish I was reminded of the Haiku that one of my summer camp kids wrote to me on 2018:

*Sky of clear water  
Dug deep down into the ground  
Warm in winter, sound*

That's the aquatic ecosystem in a nutshell.

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# Three Years of the Wrong Message

In 2017 we decided we were going to create a website for Mezzacello. We had a list of things that we wanted it do. What we did not have was a clue, or content. I had the site built. I was advised at the time that what I really needed was content. That was only partially true. The site needed blogposts, yes. But what I also needed was to think about what people thought when I sent them to the website. I thought it was enough that we were capturing and curating content in the blogs. Now I see that I have been asking people to curate my message from blogs. That is a lot to ask of anyone. It all came to a head when I submitted for a grant last summer. The committee came back to me and said, You have a nice website, but there is no there there. Arrrgghhh! Gertrude Stein was right! I was Oakland in 1910! This was my website last week.

So I culled together the data that lives in my heart and in my mind. But that doesn't get to people through OSMOSIS. So I had to grow my site. It was a group effort though. Several of my friends came through and told me what I need to do. It was an effort – an ecosystem of experience and insight. My website is a garden. The blogs were the seeds. I added time and energy and I harvested the best of the crop to show you at market, and keep Rick and I sane. Now when I send people to the website, there will be a there there, Madam Stein.

[media-credit id=3 align="alignleft" width="150"]



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Come on! If you are going to have a champion it might as well be Gertrude. She had ZERO F@<#s to give WAY BACK in 1933. She had wisdom, insight and she KNEW who she was and did not pretend. I do not pretend to be a farmer. I farm in three dimensions; the earth, the culture, and in the innovation. It's good enough for me, and I believe it is the way forward. If you choose not to see this, well, you'll find there will be no there there as well. This is the new now.

**Welcome to Mezzacello 2.0**