

The Promise of Spring

At this time of year I always feel especially hopeful. Maybe it's that I'm anticipating the asparagus that's about to poke up in my mom's garden. She grows way more than she needs, so I end up with her excess, eating so much that by June I never want to see another spear again...until right about now.

But besides the turn to spring, it seems that everywhere I go there are signs of a positive shift in food. Here in *EatingWell's* backyard in Vermont there's Shelburne Farms, a nonprofit farm that offers education programs to help build a more sustainable future. I love hearing the report from Test Kitchen manager Stacy Fraser, who takes her kids each spring to help out with the baby lambs at the farm barn (below), part of its 1,400 acres of working landscape.

Another example: the new cookbook called *New School Cuisine*. With a spiral binding, it's a seemingly humble book—with huge aspirations. The recipes sound like they're from the pages of *EatingWell*—Strawberry Spinach Salad, Beet Burgers and Sesame Noodles with Chicken & Vegetables, to name a few. The difference: each recipe makes 30+ servings. It was put together by school cooks to help Vermont schools serve healthier, locally grown foods to kids. It's just one small step in the effort to help kids eat better, but there's real enthusiasm around it. "I've had so many colleagues from around the country call and ask if they can purchase this cookbook," says Doug Davis, director of food service for the Burlington School Food Project. (It's downloadable for free at vtfed.org.)

Many of the stories in this issue also make me hopeful about the

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changing food landscape. On page 70 we hear how Georgia rancher Will Harris transformed his conventional cattle farm to a 100 percent organic, grass-based, diversified farm. His story shows that going back to the old, simpler ways of farming can be successful. And then there's the sodium story (page 53). This isn't my favorite topic. I love salt—I am a devoted cook and I know how it brings out flavors in foods. But I also know that as I get older there's a pretty darned good chance that I, like more than 50 percent of Americans over age 55, will develop high blood pressure, which can lead to heart attack, stroke and kidney failure. But here's where I'm hopeful: we now know more than ever about how excess

sodium affects our bodies. And this story gives us the information about where sodium lurks in our diets, ways to avoid it and how to make cutting back on sodium not only realistic, but also delicious.

So in the next few weeks, I'll steam those first stalks of asparagus and serve them with a drizzle of my best olive oil, a tiny sprinkling of Maldon sea salt and a squeeze of lemon to play off that salt. And I'll relish the positive changes we've made and all those to come. Send me a note to tell me what you're hopeful about this spring. And, as always, I'd love to hear what you think about the magazine.

Cheers,

Jessie

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ON THE FARM

Anyone can visit Shelburne Farms: take a walk, see the sheep, stay or eat at the Inn (May through October) or even take a cheesemaking class. More info at shelburnefarms.org

ANDY HAMILTON/COURTESY SHELburne FARMS