

[PDF] The Dirty Life: On Farming, Food, And Love

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Description:

From Publishers Weekly Kimball chucked life as a Manhattan journalist to start a cooperative farm in upstate New York with a self-taught New Paltz farmer she had interviewed for a story and later married. The Harvard-educated author, in her 30s, and Mark, also college educated and resolved to "live outside of the river of consumption," eventually found an arable 500-acre farm on Lake Champlain, first to lease then to buy. In this poignant, candid chronicle by season, Kimball

writes how she and Mark infused new life into Essex Farm, and lost their hearts to it. By dint of hard work and smart planning--using draft horses rather than tractors to plow the five acres of vegetables, and raising dairy cows, and cattle, pigs, and hens for slaughter--they eventually produced a cooperative on the CSA model, in which members were able to buy a fully rounded diet. To create a self-sustaining farm was enormously ambitious, and neighbors, while well-meaning, expected them to fail. However, the couple, relying on Mark's belief in a "magic circle" of good luck, exhausted their savings and set to work. Once June hit, there was the 100-day growing season and an overabundance of vegetables to eat, and no end to the dirty, hard, fiercely satisfying tasks, winningly depicted by Kimball.

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From Journalist Kimball accepts an assignment to interview a lanky, determined Pennsylvania farmer who runs a community farm supplying subscribers with beef, chicken, pork, vegetables, and grains. He may look a rustic, but he has a college degree and a burning passion for natural living and initiating a barter economy. The interview very quickly turns into something of a date. His visit to her on the Lower East Side of Manhattan only intensifies these two disparate characters' mutual attraction, and they soon launch a dream farm in the Adirondacks. She proves an eager, but inept, partner who must quickly shed her urban inhibitions and learn to slop pigs and slaughter chickens. Planning a wedding that will satisfy both the couple's rustic friends as well as her urbane family proves daunting. Kimball has a gift for throwing into high relief contemporary Americans' disconnect between farm-life realities and city ambitions. --Mark Knoblauch

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