“KITCHEN CRAFTERS”:
CANNING, FEMINISM, AND THE VALUE OF ‘WOMEN’S WORK’

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the enthusiasm and motivations for home canning in the twenty-first century within the context of the DIY movement of the 1990s and the current urban homesteading movement. Using interdisciplinary methodological approaches, including feminist history, feminist auto/biography, and autoethnography, the author provides historical background on home canning and homesteading in Canada and the United States; she also uses her own lived experiences of canning and gardening while pursing an MA in Gender Studies to analyze choice feminism. This thesis examines criticisms of the current interest in home canning by journalists, and the reactions of canning/urban homesteading bloggers to those articles. Ultimately this thesis argues that canning is a valuable skill and that feminism and foodwork are not incompatible; furthermore, blogging about canning and urban homesteading is breaking down the divide between the public and private spheres by providing an income for some bloggers through advertising and book deals.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Thank you, Becky, for caring for your mother, my mother in law; you went through something no university student should have to go through and you were an incredible example of strength, grace, kindness, and love. Your caring work should be more than a footnote in my thesis. Go write a memoir!

Thank you, Aaron, for the life we have built together, and for telling me that I should keep on going and that all my work is valuable. I love you.

DEDICATION

For Graeme and Matias
My sun, moon, and stars

May we always dig
In the garden
Together

And to my mother, mother-in-law,
Grandmother, aunts, cousins, and
My friends' mothers:
I am sorry that your foodwork
Was/is not always valued
And was/is so often taken for granted
Thank you for the delicious food,
The love, the memories,
And the skills you passed on

And to my Dad
For teaching me to
Never, ever, ever, ever give up

INTRODUCTION

> *Rows of jelly glasses sparkling ruby and topaz in the sun; jars of plump pickled peaches studded with pungent cloves, little pots of golden marmalade – these on the pantry shelf, like hand-worked linens on the table, are homemade for the modern household. Maybe you don't need to put up fruit as grandmother did in order to feed the family during the winter months. Maybe arithmetic proves that you can buy good commercial products for less than the cost of home canning. But you want the fun of saying, as you pass the breakfast jam, "Yes, I made it myself."*[1]

"I made it myself:" this proud statement from a 1947 cookbook resonates in the twenty-first century with the resurgent popularity of home canning. New cookbooks and blogs dedicated to the topic are continually being published as canning enthusiasts discover, or rediscover, the art of DIY food preservation. Home canners are motivated by a desire to carry on a family tradition, learn a new creative and useful skill, preserve produce from their gardens or farmer's markets, and eschew massed produced canned goods. Some canners take the practice a step further by pursuing urban homesteading as a full or part time career. Several of the bloggers to be discussed in this thesis quit jobs outside the home and forged a career inside the home by pursuing urban homesteading activities and writing blogs and manuals on the topic. While there certainly are men who can and preserve,[2] most canning cookbooks and blogs are authored by women; therefore, this thesis will focus on the ways female gender roles are entrenched and contested through home canning and urban homesteading.

The current interest in domestic arts is not without controversy, and I will analyze reactions to the trend in media publications as well as the countering responses from canning

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[1] Woman's Home Companion, *The Woman's Home Companion Cook Book* (New York: P. F. Collier & Son Corporation, 1947), 861.

[2] See Kevin West, *Saving the Season: A Cook's Guide to Home Canning, Pickling, and Preserving* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2013); and Joel MacCharles, coauthor of the blog *Well Preserved.*

and urban homesteading bloggers to those critiques. I will also examine third wave feminist perspectives on home making and use the theory of choice feminism to discuss the implications of turning domestic pursuits into a full-time career. This thesis will address the following questions: how does nostalgia for preserved food construct memories of mothers and grandmothers? How is gender and domesticity being redefined by a new generation of DIY-ers?[3] Is choosing to can and urban homestead a feminist and political act, or is it a return to traditional gender roles? Ultimately, I will argue that home preserving is a valuable skill and that feminism and foodwork are not incompatible; the performance of gender through preserving is not necessarily traditional, nor should it be viewed as a blind adherence to feminine ideals.

The foodwork of canning and preserving is a form of "doing gender".[4] The ground-breaking concept of gender as an everyday performance was first put forward by Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman; they argue that gender is a production, a "routine, methodical, and recurring accomplishment…doing gender involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine "natures."[5] In one sense, canning can be viewed as a production and an expression of traditional ideals of femininity, womanhood, and motherhood that involve taking care of one's family and nurturing them with homemade

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[3] The website Gender Spectrum defines **gender identity** as "our deeply held, internal sense of self as masculine, feminine, a blend of both, neither, or something else." **Gender expression** is defined as "how we present our gender in the world and how society, culture, community, and family perceive, interact with, and try to shape our gender. Gender expression is also related to gender roles and how society uses those roles to try to enforce conformity to current gender norms." Gender Spectrum, "The Language of Gender," (accessed August 31, 2020) https://www.genderspectrum.org/articles/language-of-gender.

[4] See Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman, "Doing Gender," *Gender and Society* 1, no. 2 (June 1987): 125-151.

[5] West and Zimmerman, "Doing Gender," 126.

food. Thus, the worry arises that preserving is a throwback to the past when women were 'tied' to the kitchen and cooking was knotted to their identities. In this regard, canning is an expression of the "essential natures" of women as culturally constructed by society.

However, this is an incomplete picture of canning in the twenty-first century. In their work to develop a feminist approach to food and a feminist food politics, Kate Cairns and Josee Johnston argue that:

> on the one hand, it requires an acknowledgement of enduring feminist issues of structure and patriarchy – the structural and cultural inequalities that devalue femininity and oppress women. On the other hand, it requires a simultaneous appreciation for women's desires and pleasures in the domestic sphere – a key insight of third-wave feminists, as well as a generation of born-again canners, pickle-makers, and cupcake bakers.[6]

My third wave feminist approach to canning will strive to achieve these goals. It will acknowledge that canning is a form of gender identity that adheres to traditional views of women as homemakers; food preservation has long been the purview of women and Mason jars represent a symbol of femininity. It cannot be ignored that home canning is enmeshed in conventional gender principles that associate women with unpaid foodwork and caring for their families. Canning has the potential to place further burdens on women's shoulders in a cultural climate that puts "homemade" and "natural" on a pedestal.

However, I doubt many home canners would consider their Mason jars as burdens; rather, as is evident from numerous blog posts, they take pride in their culinary prowess of knowing how to preserve food. Numerous women also grow the fruit and vegetables that they use for canning. There is a great divide between the workplace and the home in society, and activities that contribute to the well-being of the home are still not viewed as valuable.

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[6] Kate Cairns and Josée Johnston, *Food and Femininity* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 163.

Home canners and urban homesteaders are challenging this sentiment by making more household and pantry items at home. Domestic tasks are being rediscovered and reclaimed as more and more women view them not as drudgery, but as useful and enjoyable skills that are on the verge of being lost in a consumeristic culture.

Methodology

I am a student in two respects: I am a student of academia and I am a student of preserving and urban gardening.[7] Throughout the course of researching and writing this thesis I have absorbed a wealth of information about preserving and gardening from the blogs, cookbooks, and homesteading manuals that I have studied. I have analyzed these texts for the purpose of investigating my topic, and then I have gone back to them when I need a recipe for strawberry fig jam. My copper jam pan and the miniature size canner that I found at a thrift store are two of my prized possessions. I bring lived experience to my research and part of my methodology is placing myself in my writing by acknowledging that I am not removed from what I am investigating. Claire Snyder argues that "third-wave feminists rightly reject the universalist claim that all women share a set of common experiences, but they do not discard the concept of experience altogether. Women still look to personal experiences to provide knowledge about how the world operates and to trouble dominant narratives about how things should be. Indeed, the personal story constitutes one of the central hallmarks of third-wave feminism."[8] I have been guided through this process by feminist auto/biography and reflexivity, and autoethnography.

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[7] I describe my own outdoor work as "urban gardening" for two reasons: one, I live within city limits and I have no animals. All I do is garden. Two, continuing to use the term "homesteading" in the present romanticizes the era of colonialism that took away land from Indigenous peoples. I will expand on this further later in the introduction and in Chapter One.

[8] Claire Snyder, "What is Third-Wave Feminism? A New Directions Essay," *Signs* 34, no. 1 (Autumn 2008): 184.

In defining feminist auto/biography and reflexivity, Gayle Letherby highlights the work of sociologists Liz Stanley and C. Wright Mills who argued that the researcher is not removed from what she/he is studying; our pasts, backgrounds, and interests inevitably shape our work.[9] Letherby argues that "respondents as well as researchers are reflexive, theorizing individuals. Reflexivity – both descriptive (the description of one's reflection) and analytical (involving comparison and evaluation) – are essential parts of the research process and both researchers and respondents engage in it."[10] My background is white, working class, small town, and conservative Christian. My family had a huge garden every year and my mom made exquisite canned peaches that were globes of summertime captured in a jar. I have yet to master her technique. My mom, my aunts, and my friends' moms were almost all stay at home mothers and families with four children were common in my world. My interest in researching gender studies and feminism stems from the desire to unlearn much of what I was taught growing up. My interest in canning and gardening stems from a desire to relearn much of what I was taught growing up. I cannot discuss home canners and urban homesteaders and pretend that I am sitting outside of this world. The feminist auto/biographic aspect of this thesis involves critically reflecting on aspects of my past and present life while respectively analyzing and sharing the stories of other home gardeners and canners.

Autoethnography is a similar interdisciplinary approach that also questions if objective research is truly attainable and argues that all researchers bring their own history

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[9]Gayle Letherby, "Feminist Auto/Biography," in *The SAGE Handbook of Feminist Theory,* eds. Mary Evans, et al. (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2014), 45-46. She further argues that "feminists are concerned with who has the right to know, the nature and value of knowledge and feminist knowledge within this, the relationship between the methods chosen, how they are used and the 'knowledge' produced," 46. See also Sandra Harding, *Feminism and Methodology* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 2008).

[10] Letherby, "Feminist Auto/Biography," 50.

and personal experiences into their studies. Ellis, Adams, and Bochner assert that "autoethnography is one of the approaches that acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don't exist. [11] As an undergraduate I did not know what autoethnography was, but I always wanted to know why my professors were drawn to their area of chosen study. I assumed there had to be a personal reason lurking on the edges. When I began to write my thesis proposal, I knew that I could not analyze the resurging interest in home canning without investigating my past and my own motives for wanting to preserve and garden. Ellis, Adams, and Bochner explain that "a researcher uses tenets of autobiography and ethnography to do and write autoethnography. Thus, as a method, autoethnography is both process and product." A "process and product," or product of a process, is exactly how I would describe this thesis.

My academic training has been primarily in the humanities and my research for this thesis has also been guided by my work in feminist history. Australian feminist historian Joy Damousi articulates that feminist history plays a vital role in explaining and critiquing current events and social problems. She argues, "in providing a historical context for contemporary events[…], feminist historians will continue to play an enhanced role beyond the academy and engage with events and occasions of social, political and cultural importance."[12] Throughout this thesis I will provide historical context for the current interest in canning and homesteading and disrupt grand narratives concerning canning in the past versus the present, and canning for necessity versus pleasure. I will also critique the term

[11] Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams, and Arthur Bochner, "Autoethnography: An Overview," *Historical Social Research* 36, no. 4 (2011): 274.
[12] Joy Damousi, "Does Feminist History Have a Future?" *Australian Feminist Studies* 29, no. 80 (2014): 200.

'urban homesteading' and its colonial underpinnings. I approach my topic as a feminist historian who desires to "historicize the present"[13] by documenting and critiquing a current movement before the blogs I have analyzed begin to disappear or not be updated.

When I began my first year of university as a social history major, I was amazed and thrilled that the seemingly mundane aspects of life, such as food and cooking, had become worthy of academic enquiry. As Ludmilla Jordanova explains, "if social history is an approach, then it can be connected with the conviction that the lives of ordinary people, not just elites, should be studied; that weight should be given to lived experience; that complex relationships between people, no matter what kind, should be explored; that whatever phenomena societies throw up should be investigated historically."[14] In this thesis cookbooks, urban homesteading manuals, and food blogs – the work of "ordinary people" - are used as primary sources. Cookbooks are a more unique but vital resource when studying gender roles. The forwards of canning and homesteading cookbooks and the long prefaces before each recipe contain some of the most valuable information for my research. They reveal the authors' memories of, and motivations for, home canning; its significance in their lives; and their thoughts on canning as a sustainable living practice. Popular food and urban homesteading blogs have also proven to be an outstanding resource - many home cooks have shared their heartfelt feelings on why they preserve, and why they believe it is still relevant in the twenty-first century.

I had many questions that I thought could only be answered through conducting interviews; however, the authors of blogs and even cookbooks have satisfied most of my queries. Paula M. Salvio argues that "Beyond displaying and enacting food-centered stories,

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[13] Damousi, "Does Feminist History Have a Future?," 200.
[14] Ludmilla Jordanova, *History in Practice*, 2nd Edition (London: Hodder Education, 2006), 43.

food blogs also invite the reader to participate in the life of the blog— and the blogger— more readily than any related medium (cookbooks, food magazines, cooking shows) ever has."[15] Blogs are quickly becoming a new resource for researchers in the humanities and social sciences. An endless stream of intriguing sources is at the fingertips of any scholar, and they offer a cost-effective method for conducting research.[16]

There are problems with studying blogs, one of them being the overwhelming number of sources available. It is easy to get sucked into what Nicholas Hookway describes as the "black hole of the blogosphere."[17] A challenge I have faced is having to conquer the feeling that I am missing something – that the perfect blog or article is still out there, and I have yet to find it. To overcome this hurdle I chose blogs that contain regular content, are still being updated – with a few exceptions - and have a steady readership based on their number of followers on social media. Several of these bloggers have also published cookbooks. The overarching factor for choosing a blog was finding a post where the blogger reflects on her own choices for canning and/or urban homesteading, or on her memories of participating in these activities.

Letherby's writing on feminist auto/biography has also informed how I approach my method of using blogs as research. She articulates that,

> Feminist auto/biographical work…acknowledges the relationship between the self and the other within research and writing. Theorized subjectivity takes this responsibility seriously by not privileging the voice of the researcher/writer over that of respondents, constantly reflecting on the process/product relationship within

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[15] Paula M. Salvio, "Dishing It Out: Food Blogs and Post-Feminist Domesticity," *Gastronomica* 12, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 31.
[16] See Nicholas Hookway, "'Entering the blogosphere': Some Strategies for Using Blogs in Social Research," *Qualitative Research* 8, no. 1 (2008): 92.
[17] Hookway, "Entering the Blogosphere," 98.

> research and acknowledging and taking responsibility for differential power relations within the research process and in terms of editorship and representation.[18]

My "respondents," as they would be called in a traditional interviewing process, are the cookbook authors and bloggers whose words I am using as primary sources and I do not want my voice to overshadow theirs. The bloggers do not know that I am using their words in this thesis. Blog posts are published in the public domain, but as Kurtz et, al. note, "the unclear boundaries between blogs as spaces for private reflection versus as content for public consumption have ethical implications of interest for social scientists pursing research in online environments."[19] Food blogs are written for the purpose of sharing recipes and they often contain lengthy introductions of personal reflection that are meant to be consumed along with the results of the recipe. However, I am still respectful of the fact that their authors never intended for their writing to be featured in an academic study.

Also, blogs obscure the power relations of gender, class, and race. I cannot assume to know the gender identity, economic background, or ethnicity of any of the bloggers – or cookbook authors. Commentators who know the blogger personally can help provide clues; for example, the author of the blog *Grow and Resist* does not reveal any identifying information about her/himself, however a handle of commentators refer to this blogger as Meg. I was also able to discover through reading comments that she/he is proudly queer.[20] Throughout this thesis I will introduce bloggers and cookbook/homesteading authors by what they have written about themselves in their "About Me" sections and introductions.

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[18] Letherby, "Feminist Auto/Biography," 53.
[19] Liza C. Kurt, et al., "Blogs as Elusive Ethnographic Texts: Methodological and Ethical Challenges in Qualitative Online Research," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 16 (2017): 7-8.
[20] "Meg," "Homestead Act 2.0," *Grow and Resist* (blog), https://growandresist.wordpress.com/2010/04/26/homestead-act-2-0/.

An Introduction to My Feminist Auto/biography

For her book *Radical Homemakers*, Shannon Hayes interviewed men and women in New England who were embarking on homemaking as a career.[21] One of her interviewees, Susan, had recently graduated from a prestigious private college and felt disillusioned with climbing the ladder of success as defined by her parents and society. She was also questioning what possibly rejecting it meant for her as a feminist.[22] Hayes writes that she wanted to tell Susan that "working alone or with a partner to create a nurturing home is not antithetical to progress. Indeed, in a time of climate crisis, peak oil, and worldwide economic and social unrest, it may be the only thing that saves us. It is possible to be a feminist and to can tomatoes."[23] However, Hayes explains that she did not share these thoughts with Susan because at the time Hayes herself was "still trying to figure out what it means to be not just a homemaker, but a Radical Homemaker. How might I advocate for a meaningful and sustainable domestic life without inadvertently condoning the further subjugation of women?"[24] I have asked myself similar questions throughout the research and writing process of this thesis. Growing up, the unpaid and unending work I saw my mother, friends' mothers, and aunts carry out in the home had little appeal to me.[25] However, when it came time to decide on a thesis topic I knew I wanted to give value to their foodwork and explore

[21] Shannon Hayes, *Radical Homemakers: Reclaiming Domesticity from a Consumer Culture* (Richmondville, NY: Left to Write Press, 2010), 1.
[22] Hayes, *Radical Homemakers*, 1-5.
[23] Hayes, *Radical Homemakers*, 5.
[24] Hayes, *Radical Homemakers,* 5.
[25] Cooking and baking were the exceptions. I learned how to cook as a young girl and I have always loved looking at cookbooks and trying new recipes. However, I was fully aware that cooking was "women's work" in the community I grew up in; at family gatherings and church events women did all the cooking and cleaning.

if it was possible for women like myself, in the words of Hayes, to be "tomato-canning feminists."[26]

I am not a "born again" home canner, as Cairns and Johnston call those who have taken up this domestic art; I am the oldest of four children born to a mother of Mennonite heritage and I began helping with the cooking and canning at a very young age. I am, however, a "born again" feminist; I was trained to be a homemaker but wanted nothing more than to attend university and have a career. Discovering feminism and women's history were two of the most illuminating moments of my life. As an undergraduate student I presented papers at conferences, chaired a conference, worked as a research assistant, and overall relished four years of studying topics that interested me. I wish I could say that I also blazed through graduate school but here I am, several years later, still finishing up my degree. Throughout this process I have gone through the major life events of having children, moving to a new town, buying a house, and losing my mother in law and my father.

I now find myself with a preschooler, a baby, a garden, and a pantry shelf lined with jars of jam and pickles, wondering how this all fits with a Master's degree in Gender Studies. In the opening paragraph to her housekeeping manual *Home Comforts* Cheryl Mendelson reveals, "I am a working woman with a secret life: I keep house."[27] She is a philosopher, a lawyer, and a professor in public; in private she enjoys organizing and taking care of her home. She notes how "until now, I have almost entirely concealed this passion for domesticity…without thinking about it, I knew I would not want this information about me to get around. After all, I belong to the first generation of women who worked more than

[26] Hayes, *Radical Homemakers*, 1.
[27] Cheryl Mendelson, *Home Comforts: The Art and Science of Keeping House* (New York: Scribner, 1999), 3.

they stayed home."[28] In my academic world, my "secret life" is that I married very young, I chose to have kids in the middle of my degree in gender studies, and I enjoy spending days at home being domestic. In my world of moms and babies my "secret life" is that I am trying to finish a Master's degree.

These competing sides of who I am is a conflict that I will explore in greater depth through my discussion of choice feminism in chapter three. Claire Snyder-Hall states that, "In my view, feminism cannot tell any woman how to resolve her internal conflicts, but it does ask each woman to reflect on her own desires and seriously consider how her choices might play a role in propping up or calling into question the sex/gender system."[29] As a feminist scholar I will study these conflicts and contradictions by placing myself within the argument and analyzing my own choices regarding canning, urban homesteading, and careers inside and outside the home.

Literature Review

In their 2005 anthology on feminist food studies, Arlene Voski Avakian and Barbara Haber observed that "until recently…few scholars in food studies brought a gendered or feminist perspective to their work on food, and feminist scholars focused only on women's food pathologies."[30] The interdisciplinary fields of food studies and gender and women's studies were separate entities in academe; the former rarely meaningfully studied women, and the latter dismissed cooking as "merely a marker of patriarchal oppression and,

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[28] Mendelson, *Home Comforts*, 3.
[29] Claire Snyder-Hall, "Third-Wave Feminism and the Defense of "Choice"," *Perspectives on Politics* 8, no. 1 (March 2010): 259.
[30] Arlene Voski Avakian and Barbara Haber, "Feminist Food Studies: A Brief History," in *From Betty Crocker to Feminist Food Studies*, edited by Arlene Voski Avakian and Barbara Haber (Amherst: U of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 2.

therefore, not worthy of attention."[31] In the late 1990s scholars increasingly embarked on research that combined both disciplines, and the subfield of food and gender studies was established. Anthropologist Carole M. Counihan led the way in studying food, culture and gender in her field,[32] sociologist Marjorie DeVault wrote a seminal book on the caring work that women perform by feeding their families,[33] and social historian Sherrie A. Inness has produced several articles and books on gender, cooking, and kitchen culture in the United States.[34] Avakian and Haber provide a thorough history of the major works in food and gender studies in the introduction to their anthology. The following literature review will highlight new Canadian and American studies on food and feminism, food and nostalgia, and canning and urban homesteading.

Feminist food studies is now a bourgeoning field in Canada with sociologists Kate Cairns and Josée Johnston leading the way in studying the intricacies between food, gender, class, and race. Cairns and Johnston's recent book, *Food and Femininity*, works towards a feminist food politics by investigating the relationship between women and shopping for food, cooking for their families, eating healthy – but not too healthy - and cooking for pleasure. They argue that "for a woman to ignore food is to risk being deemed a failure, pushed outside the boundaries of hegemonic femininity."[35] Their female interviewees felt the pressure of providing nourishing – and if they could afford it, organic – meals for their families. In their conclusion Cairns and Johnston ask,

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[31] Avakian and Haber, "Feminist Food Studies: A Brief History," 2.
[32] See for example, Carole M. Counihan and Steven L. Kaplan, eds., *Food and Gender: Identity and Power,* Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998.
[33] Marjorie DeVault, *Feeding the Family: The Social Organization of Caring as Gendered Work,* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991.
[34] See for example, Sherrie A. Inness, *Dinner Roles: American Women and Culinary Culture*, Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2001.
[35] Cairns and Johnston, *Food and Femininity*, 174.

> While a feminist food politics builds on women's experiences with food, it also pays keen attention to broader food struggles. This dual commitment requires that we ask difficult questions of the collectivity: Who has the creativity, the care, the resources, and the commitment to cook up a "good" dinner? (That is sustainable, healthy, socially just, and delicious?) If the answer to this question is mainly "women" – and, in particular, privileged groups of women – then a feminist food politics clearly has work to do.[36]

The questions they ask are similar to the ones I am asking about home food preservation. Cultural and economic resources have aided many urban homesteading ventures, and several op-eds specifically discuss the highly educated, white, and middle-class women who are taking up the domestic arts.[37]

The twenty-first century urban homesteading phenomenon is only beginning to receive academic attention; however, Brenda Park and Oona Morrow's recent study on urban homesteading and intensive mothering in the United States provides a vital starting point for my work in this area. They interviewed urban homesteaders with children for their study and they argue that "because of the types of labor that homesteading simultaneously demands and celebrates – it may reinforce the ideology of intensive, elite motherhood and gendered labor, even as homesteading mothers tend to describe their lives in terms of care, pleasure, and choice."[38] Parker and Morrow found that mothers were more responsible for foodwork and the addition of a child to the family was often the moment when women began to take on homesteading activities.[39] Furthermore, the majority of their interviewees were white, well-educated, and heterosexual, and Parker and Morrow address how these urban homesteaders

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[36] Cairns and Johnston, *Food and Femininity*, 173-174.
[37] See for example, Peggy Orenstein, "The Femivore's Dilemma," *The New York Times*, March 11, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/14/magazine/14fob-wwln-t.html?_r=0.
[38] Brenda Parker and Oona Morrow, "Urban Homesteading and Intensive Mothering: (Re)gendering Care and Environmental Responsibility in Boston and Chicago," *Gender, Place & Culture* (2017): 4.
[39] Parker and Morrow, "Urban Homesteading and Intensive Mothering," 6.

can cause the "Othering" of mothers who do not fit this demographic and lifestyle. They explain, "In our study, urban homesteaders often viewed themselves as leaders, teachers, and role models, pointing out that there were people 'admiring us and the chickens.'"[40] While I respectfully disagree with some of their statements, their work is extremely useful for illuminating the elitism that can go along with home food preservation and how it can become a status symbol of the 'correct' way of doing gender and foodwork.

Danille Elise Christensen's essay on Southern home canning is a celebration of women who preserve their own food; her research is intermingled with photographs of rows of canning at county fairs, fully stocked root cellars, and women happily canning fresh fruit. She discusses how much public commentary on canning "emphasizes creativity and choice in canning's (urban) present, but compulsion and need in its (rural) past."[41] Her research challenges this rather ignorant assumption by highlighting the fact that many rural, working class, and farming women simply love to can - in the present and in the past. Christensen notes that she does not "intend to romanticize the hardships that have accompanied home food production: during the 1930s, one sharecropper's wife described late summer canning as "a woman's hardest time," hot work piled onto everyday tasks and wedged between tending the garden and harvesting cotton." The goal of her work is to acknowledge that for many rural, farming women canning was not simply a chore that had no aesthetic value.[42]

Sociologist Jennifer Braun also studied rural canning by focusing on a small community in Alberta; she interviewed a parent generation of canners and several of their children in order to explore how "[canning] practices were sustained or broken

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[40] Parker and Morrow, "Urban Homesteading and Intensive Mothering," 9.
[41] Danille Elise Christensen, "Simply Necessity? Agency and Aesthetics in Southern Home Canning," *Southern Cultures* (Spring 2015): 17.
[42] Christensen, "Simply Necessity?," 18.

intergenerationally."[43] For the parent generation, planting a garden and preserving the surplus was necessary for many of their families due to poverty.[44] Even though canning was a necessity for this generation of participants, this did not mean it was stripped of emotion or personal satisfaction in a job well done; Braun notes how "the symbolic significance of having shelves full of canned goods was a symbol of provision and care, and carried great meaning for them."[45] Braun does contrast the past and the present later in her article by asserting that canning and gardening is "no longer done for survival, but more for pleasure, for the sake of continuing a family tradition, or because of an aversion to highly processed and commercialized food."[46] But she does note how both generations of her participants took pride in their work and enjoyed seeing their pantries filled with Mason jars, she calls this the "vital link" between canning in the past and in the present.[47]

Critiquing the Past/Present Dichotomy and the Term "Urban Homesteading"

A Brief History of Canning

The next few pages will place my study of food preservation and urban homesteading in its historical context. In May 2013, blogger Valerie Lugonja of *A Canadian Foodie* created the Canadian Food Experience Project with the goal of highlighting uniquely Canadian food, culinary traditions, and food heroes.[48] In the fifth challenge Lugonja makes

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[43] Jennifer Braun, "The Making and Breaking of Food Preservation Practices in a Rural Albertan Community," *Rural Sociology* 80, no. 2 (2015): 233.
[44] Braun, "The Making and Breaking of Food Preservation Practices," 235.
[45] Braun, "The Making and Breaking of Food Preservation Practices," 236.
[46] Braun, "The Making and Breaking of Food Preservation Practices," 241.
[47] Braun, "The Making and Breaking of Food Preservation Practices," 243.
[48]Each month for thirteen months Canadian food bloggers were challenged to write a post on a particular theme. For the fifth installment, "Preserving: Our Canadian Food Tradition," food bloggers reflected on their most prominent canning and preserving memories and favourite recipes. Valerie Lugonja, "Announcing The Canadian Food Experience Project," *A Canadian Foodie* (blog), May 6, 2013, https://www.acanadianfoodie.com/2013/05/06/announcing-the-canadian-food-experience-project/.

the argument that "preserving food is fundamental to our Canadian food heritage."[49] Her argument is based on the premise that Canada is a winter country, and our ancestors had to preserve food in order to survive. She muses, "The intrinsic knowledge of one's food culture that comes through witnessing the practice of food preservation within the family out of necessity is fundamental to understanding Canadian food culture, yet now intangible."[50] When preserving blogs and cookbooks reflect on canning's history in the United States and Canada there is a common narrative that it was once a necessary task for families to undertake in order to have food for the winter, but the advent of commercially canned goods in the early and mid twentieth century provided families with the opportunity to go to the grocery store rather than their root cellar to obtain preserved foods. These blogs and cookbooks also mention how women were encouraged to plant "victory gardens" and preserve the excess during both world wars, as canned food was shipped off to the front lines to provide food for soldiers. There is an overarching assumption that after World War II home canning became a more niche activity and ultimately a choice, not a necessity.

The past/present dichotomy of this popular account of home canning is indeed more complicated. In their article on fabriculture, Jack Z. Bratich and Heidi M. Brush argue that the modern definition of time that relegates certain traditions to the past and specific eras is problematic; "modern linear time is thus a cut that makes an ongoing tradition (one that might vary in its power and visibility) seem like a "return" to the past."[51] The narrative of canning in food blogs often neglects the back to the land movement of the late 1960s and

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[49] Valerie Lugonja, "The Canadian Food Experience Project: Round Up Five," *A Canadian Foodie* (blog), October 16, 2013, https://www.acanadianfoodie.com/2013/10/16/the-canadian-food-experience-project-round-up-five.

[50] Lugonja, "The Canadian Food Experience Project: Round Up Five."

[51] Jack Z. Bratich and Heidi M. Brush, "Fabricating Activism: Craft-Work, Popular Culture, Gender," *Utopian Studies* 22, no. 2 (2011): 249-250.

1970s. Canning gained popularity during the counterculture when gardening, preserving, and other home arts were taken up by like-minded individuals who wanted to shun capitalism and live a more self-sufficient lifestyle. In the introduction to the 1977 preserving cookbook *Stocking Up*, the editor writes, "since organic gardening and farming's earliest days we have witnessed a growing need for a book that thoroughly covers the subject of natural food preservation. That need is at its peak right now, because not since the "Victory Gardens" of World War II have so many people been raising and preserving so much of their own food as today."[52] As the 1970s turned to the 1980s the counterculture faded from prominence, but the DIY crafting movement of the late 1990s and early 2000s paved the way for canning to be revived by home cooks and urban homesteaders in the twenty-first century.

In terms of necessity, Braun points out that "canning in the past was inextricably linked to home gardening and food gathering. Gardens were planted to ensure there was food, and canning was done so that food would not be wasted. It was expected that every woman who had land would grow and preserve that food."[53] For rural women, canning was certainly necessary. Ian Mosby discusses the difference between rural and urban women in his study of food on Canada's home front in World War II; during the war sugar for canning was rationed and rural women voiced their complaints about urban women receiving more sugar. He explains, "many rural women wondered why areas with the highest domestic production of fresh fruit were being asked to cut down on their preserving in order to provide sugar to urban women who had never canned before and who thus would likely either spoil

[52] Carol Hupping Stoner, ed. *Stocking Up: How to Preserve the Foods You Grow, Naturally* (Emmaus, PA: Rodale Press, 1977), x.
[53] Braun, "The Making and Breaking of Food Preservation Practices," 241.

good fruit through inexperience or simply put the sugar to other uses."[54] Rural women argued that they did not have the same access to foodstuffs as urban women, and therefore depended on their gardens and the ability to preserve their fruits and vegetables.[55]

Published in Winnipeg by the McFayden Seed Company in 1941, the *Vegetable Cook Book* encouraged housewives to grow their own vegetable and herb gardens and can the surplus for eating during the winter. The first half of the cookbook provides detailed instructions on how to prepare and cook a variety of vegetables, and the second half discusses canning, pickling, and salads. The introduction to the "Pickles" chapter notes, "With a good supply of cucumbers, onions, celery, and other such vegetables, right at the kitchen door as it were, the wise housewife not only cans a quantity of these for winter use, but makes a number of delicious pickle mixtures."[56] The gardening and preserving skills expected by a housewife in this cookbook is considerable. Although it was published during the Second World War, there is no mention of war or victory gardens. The McFayden Seed Company was targeting the book to their customers who had likely already been planting gardens for years: "Our job is not complete even when we supply you with our carefully selected seeds. You have to enjoy them or we do not get repeat orders, and so – our Vegetable Cook Book; exciting new recipes, as well as standard ways of cooking new vegetables, prepared especially for us by Canada's leading dietician and cooking expert."[57]

The image of the rural canning farm woman is historically accurate, even if it does not represent the complete picture of the history of canning. Why *is* canning viewed as a

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[54] Ian Mosby, *Food Will Win the War: The Politics, Culture, and Science of Food on Canada's Home Front* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 72.
[55] Mosby, *Food Will Win the War*, 72.
[56] McFayden Seed Company, *The Vegetable Cook Book* (Winnipeg: McFayden Seed Co. Ltd., 1941), 26.
[57] McFayden Seed Company, *The Vegetable Cook Book*, 27.

tradition, and a form of women's work? While this question is beyond the scope of this thesis, I will briefly address it here. Canning was invented in 1809 by Nicolas Appert after Napoleon Bonaparte offered a reward to anyone who could invent a method of preserving food for his army. Techniques and patents for commercially preserving food in tin cans quickly followed across Europe and the United States.[58] The advent of home canning is linked to the invention of the Mason jar by John Mason in 1858[59] and the rise of home economics in the early twentieth century which strived to teach women scientific methods of homemaking. Braun notes that "the presence of the Alberta Home Economics Association, connected to the nearby University of Alberta, existed as a source of information and conduit for information sharing among home gardeners."[60] Home preserving was also supported on a national level, several of the women she interviewed still used the old canning pamphlets they received from the federal Department of Agriculture.

In the United States, the girls' tomato club movement swept the South in 1910 when Marie Samuella Cromer created a program that economically benefited farm girls.[61] These young women grew tomatoes, canned them, and sold them for profit; they also kept careful records of their harvests, canning yields, and plans for what they would do with the money.[62] Part of the mandate of the club was for the tomato canners to have control over their own finances.[63] They were the original tomato canning feminists. However, Elizabeth Engelhardt argues that "as the decades passed and the tomato clubs evolved into more general canning

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[58] Editors of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* "Canning," *Britannica* (accessed August 31, 2020) https://www.britannica.com/topic/canning-food-processing.
[59] Anna Goldfarb, "A Short History of the Mason Jar," *The Kitchn*, August 29, 2016, https://www.thekitchn.com/a-short-history-of-the-mason-jar-234146.
[60] Braun, "The Making and Breaking of Food Preservation Practices," 237.
[61] Elizabeth Engelhardt, "Canning Tomatoes, Growing "Better and More Perfect Women:" The Girls' Tomato Club Movement, *Southern Cultures* (Winter 2009): 79.
[62] Engelhardt, "Canning Tomatoes," 81.
[63] Engelhardt, "Canning Tomatoes," 83.

clubs and home demonstration programs, war, the Great Depression, and increasing mechanization of agriculture all changed the politics of rural life in the southern United States. In contrast to the earliest club messages of empowerment and social change, more traditional visions of home, family, gender, and economics became ascendant."[64] Perhaps this played a role in home canning becoming an extension of women's work in the home, and not for profit in the outer world of business.

Examining the Terms "Homesteading" and "Urban Homesteading"

Historian Brian Q. Cannon argues that "homesteading has been a malleable concept that has been used to illustrate and reinforce a variety of ideological and interpretive messages."[65] In terms of foodwork, urban – or modern – homesteading is a movement that involves relying less on the industrial food system and more on what can be grown, raised, or preserved in one's own apartment or property. Urban homesteading has philosophical roots in previous back to the land movements; but instead of packing up a VW van and moving to the wilderness of British Columbia, modern homesteaders are living out characteristics of these movements in towns and cities with the belief that even the smallest of spaces can have room for a few edible plants and Mason jars of homemade food. Michelle Catherine Nelson explains that "homesteading doesn't have to be defined by where we live, but rather by the choices we make. It's about slowing down and taking the time to do it yourself."[66] But homesteading is not only about actions, it is also a worldview or frame of mind. Rebecca

[64] Engelhardt, "Canning Tomatoes," 91.
[65] Brian Q. Cannon, "Homesteading Remembered: A Sesquicentennial Perspective," *Agricultural History* 87, no. 1 (Winter 2013): 2.
[66] Michelle Catherine Nelson, *The Urban Homesteading Cookbook: Forage, Farm, Ferment and Feast for a Better World* (Madeira Park, Douglas & McIntyre: 2015), 12.

Gould points out that homesteading is "a 'state of mind' as much as it is a particular set of practices or a particular level of – ever elusive – self-sufficiency."[67]

In his study of back-to-the-landers, Jeffrey Jacob includes a chapter on "Urban Pioneers" and asserts that "in a technical sense one does have to live on country property in order to qualify as a neohomesteader, but back-to-the-land is more than living on a smallholding. It is also an interrelated complex of values ("a philosophy of how to live your life") that centers around the ideas of self-reliance, voluntary simplicity, and mindfulness and the use of sustainable, soft technologies."[68] It is these qualities that appear in food preservation blogs and cookbooks; the authors may not necessarily live on and off their own land, but by canning fruits and vegetables they are eschewing the supermarket to a certain degree, stocking away food for the winter, giving homemade gifts to friends and family, and being mindful of what is in their food and where it came from.

Urban homesteaders embrace the domestic arts from food preservation to soap making to homemade yogurt. An article in the *Georgia Straight* describes this trend in Vancouver:

> Picture the scene: you arrive at someone's home to find a selection of home-dried herbs in the kitchen, handmade soap in the bathroom, and home-brewed beer in the fridge. Venturing outside, you're greeted by the gentle clucking of chickens and the industrious hum of bees. A garden of freshly planted vegetables completes the picture. You're not in the Southlands, the Okanagan, or a farm-stay B & B on Vancouver Island. You're in East Vancouver, and all of this is happening on a standard-size plot of land, just steps away from the Commercial Drive SkyTrain station.[69]

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[67] Rebecca Kneale Gould, "Modern Homesteading in America: Negotiating Religion, Nature, and Modernity," *Worldviews: Environment, Culture, Religion* 3 (1999): 185.
[68] Jeffrey Jacob, *New Pioneers: The Back-To-The-Land Movement and the Search for a Sustainable Future* (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1997), 150.
[69] Jessica Werb, "Vancouver's Urban Homesteaders Go Back to the Land," *The Georgia Straight,* May 14, 2014, http://www.straight.com/life/643821/vancouvers-urban-homesteaders-go-back-land.

Rick Havlak opened the Homesteader's Emporium in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside in 2012 and he told *The Georgia Straight* that the majority of his customers "are maybe 20 to 35, people who live in the city that are just curious and maybe haven't been exposed to gardening and living outside…People use the word hipsters a lot, and I'd say that some of the people that come in belong to that category, but it really is pretty varied."[70] This age category corresponds to the age of the back to the landers in the 1970s; once again a generation of people in their twenties and early thirties are seeking a deeper connection to nature. One main difference, however, is that this new generation is striving to go 'back to the land' without leaving urban environments.[71]

The history behind the term "urban homesteading", as well as the problems with the continued use of the word "homesteading," must be examined. The twenty-first century urban homesteading movement can be traced back to settler dreams of owning and working one's own land. In the United States, the Homestead Act of 1862 gave "160 acres of land free to anyone who would live on the plot and farm it for five years."[72] Although the Homestead Act gave settlers land, it did not take into account the equipment and supplies that were needed to begin farming. Furthermore, much of the land in the mid-west was not suitable for small-scale farming.[73] In Canada, homesteaders were also given 160 acres. Sarah Carter explains that "we think of the term today as synonymous with farming, or generally establishing a home in a rural area. But in Western Canada (and the U.S. West) the word

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[70] Werb, "Vancouver's Urban Homesteaders Go Back to the Land."
[71] Some urban homesteaders do move to more rural areas to buy property and raise animals. See Antonia Smith, "The Farm Wife Mystery School: Women's Use of Social Media in the Contemporary North American Urban Homestead Movement," *Studies in the Education of Adults* 47, no. 2 (Autumn 2015): 142-143.
[72] David Goldfield, et al., *The American Journey: Volume 1* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2009), 559.
[73] Goldfield, et al., *The American Journey*, 559.

"homesteader" had a much more specific meaning. It meant that you were located on a free grant of 160 acres on offer from the federal government. You paid ten dollars to legally locate there, and you then had to cultivate and live on the land before you legally owned the land."[74] Despite the trials and tribulations of homesteading in the West, the image of the independent pioneer making a life on the land has remained an enduring image in American and Canadian mythology.[75]

Homesteading involved the displacement of Indigenous peoples from their lands by white settlers, and continuing to use the term "homesteading" in the twenty-first century should not be done without taking this history into consideration.[76] The only time I found any reference to the racist history of homesteading in my research was from the author of the gardening blog *Grow and Resist*. She engages in homesteading activities and supports many of the proponents of the urban homesteading movement, but she strongly feels that the term "homestead" should no longer be used in the twenty-first century. She asserts, "when I hear 'homestead' I think manifest destiny & rugged individualism. A bit less resistance & self-sufficiency and more "Get out of our way – we own this place. You know, cuz it's our God-given right. So move along. This is our land now. Mine, mine, mine!" When I think 'homestead,' I think racism, colonization and genocide. Not sun-warmed tomatoes, string beans and kale. There is too much tainted history wrapped up in the term."[77] As a history major who focused on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, I appreciate the historical

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[74] Sarah Carter, *Imperial Plots: Women, Land, and the Spadework of British Colonialism on the Canadian Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2016), xx.
[75] See Cannon, "Homesteading Remembered," 2.
[76] Carter, *Imperial Plots*, xx.
[77] "Meg," "Homestead Act 2.0."

context and critical analysis that this article brings to the urban homesteading blogosphere.[78] History cannot be idealized or oversimplified, and I will discuss this further in Chapter One.

Overview of Chapters

Nostalgia is a strong motivation for canning; many home canners preserve to carry on family traditions and connect with their past. Grandmothers, mothers, and aunts figure prominently in many cookbooks and blogs about canning. Food scholar Deborah Lupton advocates for the value of studying food and memories by asserting that "the analysis of memories about food serves to reveal the ways in which our memories of everyday life are socially constructed and patterned, to demonstrate that individual memory of 'banal' events and experiences is not simply the subjective property of individuals but is part of a shared cultural experience."[79] Canning with relatives, particularly one's grandmother(s), is a shared cultural experience for many food preservation bloggers and cookbook authors. By sharing these memories with their audience, they are recreating this (gendered) cultural experience and projecting a gender identity onto their female ancestors. Chapter one will analyze the implications of remembering one's female ancestors through their foodwork. It will also discuss the enduring power of one of literature's most famous mothers: Ma Ingalls.

Chapter two will begin with a discussion of the DIY movement of the 1990s and the role that *BUST* Magazine played in making domestic tasks seem useful, cool, and hip. Canning can be viewed as isolated drudgery – standing over a boiling pot of water for hours on end during the most sweltering months of the year to preserve food for the winter. The

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[78] Sarah Carter's book *Imperial Plots*, contains examples of the outright racism of the British colonial mindset. She asserts, "Prairie Canada was crafted as a colony of the British Empire, and hopes were high for its destiny as the brightest agricultural jewel in the imperial diadem," 5.

[79] Deborah Lupton, "Food, Memory and Meaning: The Symbolic and Social Nature of Food Events," *The Sociological Review* (1994): 668.

Mason jar can be seen as a symbol of women's work in the home, an old-fashioned way of life that predates feminism. On the other hand, canning can be viewed as a craft that creates community and fills canners with a sense of pride that they created something tangible with their own hands. The Mason jar can be looked at as a reclamation of preserving food in season and standing up to the industrial food system. Canning is increasingly being viewed in a positive light as home canners collect Mason jars and fill their pantries, closets, and basements with home canned food.

The third chapter will define urban homesteading and focus on the food preservation practices of its participants. My research on canning quickly led me to the world of urban homesteading. Several of the canning blogs I found were also homesteading blogs, and when I searched my local library for books on canning I discovered that urban homesteading manuals contained the most useful sections on the topic for answering my research questions. Urban homesteaders strive to live more sustainably and self-sufficiently; gardening, shopping at farmer's markets, and preserving food are all part of this goal. Urban homesteader Rachel Kaplan argues, "The industrialization of agriculture and the widespread distribution of commercial food products may have given us more time, but it has taken away our local foods and food sources, heirloom food preservation practices, and our involvement with the food we eat. It has impoverished our human culture."[80] For her and other homesteaders, food preservation is a political act that draws attention to the state of the food agribusiness and its complete disconnect from the seasons and local food systems. Home canning is about giving food dollars to local farmers instead of food conglomerates, connecting with nature and the earth, and creating community by sharing and trading one's

[80] Rachel Kaplan with K. Ruby Blume, *Urban Homesteading: Heirloom Skills for Sustainable Living* (Skyhorse Publishing: New York, 2011), 140.

surplus foodstuffs. This chapter will focus on the bloggers who have turned urban homesteading and blogging into a career, and if this is a feminist act or a return to traditional gender roles.

Conclusion

Why study something as seemingly mundane as canning and preserving? Why study food in general? Canadian historians Franca Iacovetta and Valerie Korinek have extensively studied women's lives in postwar Canada, and they argue that, "food is about more than recipes, cooking, nutrition and eating. The practices surrounding its purchase, preparation, and consumption have long been a matter of conflict and contest…Food traditions evolve in social and cultural contexts that are shaped by economic conditions and class politics, racial-ethnic relations, and other factors."[81] Food is never mundane, it is never quaint. It is an expression of who we are and where we have come from in terms of gender, class, and myriad other factors. For many home canners, preserving food is about caring for one's self, one's family, and the planet.

Preserving is an integral aspect of various foodways across the world, and although the methods and ingredients may be different the purpose is the same – to make a product with one's own hands at home that can be enjoyed by family and friends throughout the year. The significant number of canning, preserving, and homesteading books that have been published in the past several years prove that my research topic is a timely area of study. With interest in sourcing local foods, planting gardens, and canning and preserving once

[81] Franca Iacovetta and Valerie J. Korinek, "Jell-O Salads, One-Stop Shopping, and Maria the Homemaker: The Gender Politics of Food," in *Sisters or Strangers? Immigrant, Ethnic, and Racialized Women in Canadian History*, edited by Marlene Epp, Franca Iacovetta, and Frances Swyripa (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 190.

again flourishing, I am undoubtedly diving into a topic that allows for a close analysis of gender and foodwork both in the past and the present.

CHAPTER ONE

Food, Memories, and Nostalgia - Preserving by Preserving

> *"The kitchen and the table, of course, have long been powerful sites that invite us to engage our memories, enact our traditions, and affirm our identities, and, in so doing, feel a connection to family and friends near and far, living and dead. They can be timeless spaces, where the dishes and objects speak to us of people, place, and ways long gone, or they can be spaces equally storied by modernity, change, and conflict."*[82]

A simple Mason jar can invoke strong memories of food and family. Canning blogs and cookbooks are filled with celebrations of women's preserving work through the act of remembering; the authors frequently describe moments when they watched or helped their mothers and grandmothers bottle up the summer harvest. These nostalgic home canners take pride in the fact that their aunts, mothers, and grandmothers canned and passed on the tradition, and 'putting up' food is a way for them to feel connected to their ancestors. A connection to the past and nurturing figures is constantly evoked in canning blogs and cookbooks. Nostalgia is a powerful motivator for preserving food, but nostalgia also causes the past to be looked at through rose coloured glasses. Remembering a woman only through her foodwork erases the rest of her identity. Furthermore, the extensive focus on female ancestors in food blogs and cookbooks inadvertently perpetuates the expectation that women should make food from scratch for their families. On the other hand, remembering and carrying on the tradition of women's preserving work gives value to an important skill.

When food bloggers and cookbook authors ponder their first memories of home canning, images of mothers, aunts, and grandmothers stirring pots of hot strawberry jam, peeling golden peaches, and filling their root cellars with preserves all stand out. In her study

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[82] Whitney E. Brown, ""Eat it to Save It": April McGreger in Conversation with Tradition," *Southern Cultures* (Winter 2009): 97.

of food production in British Columbia's Peace River region, Megan J. Davies asserts that growing gardens, raising animals, and collecting wild foods and storing these goods in a root cellar was the standard way of life for Euro-Canadian settlers during the 1910s to the 1940s.[83] Davies argues that "frontier women of the Peace were intimately connected with the work of creating and maintaining healthy settler bodies: food production was thus part of 'motherwork' which included everything from community midwifery to jam making."[84]

Watching a female relative go about the daily task of preparing food for her family is a memory most people have in common. In their study of "foodies" and gender, Cairns, Johnston, and Baumann found that the memories of both male and female foodies "tended to emphasize the role of food within the family home and almost universally revolved around mothers."[85] When fathers did factor into food memories it was due to their professional work in the restaurant and industrial food industries. The feeling of being cared for through food came from the foodies' mothers.[86] Canadian folklorist Diane Tye[87] came to similar conclusions in her study of the significance of bread and bread making traditions in Newfoundland culture. She notes that "when folklore students[88] remember the homemade

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[83] Megan J. Davies, "Stocking the Root Cellar: Foodscapes in the Peace River Region," In *Edible Histories, Cultural Politics: Towards a Canadian Food History*, edited by Franca Iacovetta, Valerie J. Korinek, and Marlene Epp, 94-108 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 94.

[84] Davies, "Stocking the Root Cellar," 96.

[85] Kate Cairns, Josée Johnston, and Sharon Baumann, "Caring about Food: Doing Gender in the Foodie Kitchen," *Gender & Society* 24, no. 5 (2010): 601.

[86] Cairns, Johnston, and Baumann, "Caring about Food," 601-602.

[87] The work of Diane Tye led me to the field of folklore studies. Tye and fellow folklorist Pauline Greenhill argue that "folklore offers women's studies a closer empirical focus on everyday life. The two areas share – among many other aspects – interdisciplinary orientation, a recognition of the social effects of marginalization, an appreciation for the effects of context on meaning, an interest in common, everyday, lived experience and a goal of advocacy for their subjects." Pauline Greenhill and Diane Tye, "Popular Theory: Canadian Feminist Folklore and Ethnology in the 1990s," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 36, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 193.

[88] Diane Tye explains that her "research draws heavily on one aspect of the [Memorial University's Folklore and Language Archive]'s collection: folklore survey cards that students completed as part of folklore courses from the mid-1960s to the present day. These brief bits of folklore that students collected from family and friends, or remembered from their own past, now represent a wealth of information on everything from turns

bread of their childhoods, they also emphasize nurturing figures: mothers and grandmothers. They speak of their maternal genealogy and of how bread connects them to their family and their past."[89] The memory of having a female relative make food for her family for the winter invokes similar feelings of warmth, nurture, and security in today's home canners and these powerful feelings help explain why women are so often remembered through their food work.

Blogger and cookbook author Ashley English writes of her grandmother, "My own introduction to the alchemy of home canning came at a very young age. Ruby (aka "Nanny"), my maternal grandmother, seemed to spend most of her summer days boiling, stirring, pouring, and pickling something…while it would be years before I got around to "taking up the jar" myself, Nanny's garage full of homemade provisions hung around the edges of my culinary memory, nudging gently from the sidelines."[90] Similarly, Valerie Lugonja writes of her Grandma Maude, "She smelled of moist black earth each growing season. She rose with the sun and faced each long day of really hard work, and thrived. She never endured work. She challenged each day to conquer her, yet knew it could not. She surrendered to dusk, deeply satisfied by the accomplishments of her day. I watched. I learned."[91] Grandma Maude grew a garden every year and preserved its bounty, along with fruit from the Okanagan. Lugonja can vividly recall the canning seasons and how groups of women would get together to fill jar after jar of summer produce.

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of phrase and remedies to children's games and supernatural beliefs," ""Bread for the Road": Intersections of Food and Culture in Newfoundland and Labrador," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 26, no. 2 (2011): 175.

[89] Tye, "Bread for the Road," 188.

[90] Ashley English, *Homemade Living: Canning & Preserving with Ashley English* (New York: Lark Books, 2010), 9.

[91] Valerie Lugonja, "The Canadian Food Experience Project Challenge Five: Preserving," *A Canadian Foodie* (blog), October 7, 2013, https://www.acanadianfoodie.com/2013/10/07/the-canadian-food-experience-project-challenge-five-preserving/.

English and Lugonja's writing makes evident that the canning season did require a considerable amount of exertion, but overall the memories of their grandmothers preserving work and well stocked pantries are idyllic. The point of canning blog posts and cookbooks is to sell the reader on the idea of canning, and painting a vivid picture of nature, abundance, and jars that shine like jewels is an excellent way to accomplish that goal. Many blogs are designed to generate revenue, cookbooks are written to be sold, and some authors could be telling their readers what they want to hear. Is the preserving and gardening grandmother a mythical figure for some authors? It is possible. Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith assert that "always mediated, cultural memory is the product of fragmentary personal and collective experiences articulated through technologies and media that shape even as they transmit memory. Acts of memory are thus acts of performance, representation, and interpretation."[92] By sharing pieces of their personal memories, canning authors are adding to the cultural memory of grandmothers who cooked, gardened, and preserved. They may – and some absolutely do – have memories of male ancestors canning, but the cultural memory of canning is focused on grandmothers. I would argue that canning bloggers and cookbook authors focus on female ancestors because they – and their editors – know that their readers will identify with this cultural memory; that does not mean these memories are false.

I also primarily remember my maternal grandmother and mother-in-law through their foodwork. However, other memories can be erased and/or forgotten when one chooses to focus on food memories. My grandma wrote poetry, which I did not know about until she passed away. My mother-in-law was proud to be a nurse, and would it bother her if that was glossed over in favour of remembering her foodwork? Cairns and Johnston note how

[92] Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith, "Feminism and Cultural Memory: An Introduction," *Signs* 28, no. 1 (Autumn 2002): 5.

"throughout much of modern Euro-American history, the idealized woman was one who cooked delicious, nourishing meals for her family, and maintained a smiling face in the midst of domestic labour."[93] This is the memory that many canning bloggers and cookbook authors have of their grandmothers. Of course, it is more than likely that their grandmothers did not feel this way all the time, or even at all, but these are the happy, comforting food memories that become etched in a child's mind that carry on into adulthood. In her study of 'mommyblogs' and the future of history, May Friedman argues that while mommyblogs are sometimes written by anonymous authors and could be made up, "a critical analysis of mommyblogs from the perspective of feminist history allows us – and our future historian – to consider the specific ways that mothers continue to be constrained by the ideology of the 'good mother.'"[94] Similarly, female ancestors are constrained by viewing them through the lens of food nostalgia – even if these maternal figures are not real, the authors of canning literature are inadvertently demonstrating that women are often remembered through their food work.

Memories of grandmothers, mothers, and aunts, whether real or imagined, are being used to encourage the author's readership to take up canning. While this is certainly constraining, the fact that some bloggers may be using maternal ancestors in order to generate viewership of their blogs inadvertently gives value and voice to women's foodwork. In her discussion of Friedman's article, Rachel Loew asserts that the popularity of blogs about motherhood "is an incredible moment, for the social lives of women have typically been among the most elusive and undocumented sectors of historical experience in the

[93] Cairns and Johnston, *Food and Femininity*, 6.
[94] May Friedman, "On Mommyblogging: Notes to a Future Feminist Historian," *Journal of Women's History* 22, no. 4 (Winter 2010): 198-199.

archives."[95] The comments on canning blogs are loaded with memories of the readers' own grandmothers, and I am of the positive mindset that these comments are real. Women's preserving skills are being celebrated in the public forum of food and homesteading blogs by the readers of these works.

My mother in law knew she wanted to be a nurse from the age of five and she spent her twenties travelling and working in various countries. In her thirties she started a family and her four children became her pride and joy. After her three sons moved out of the home to start their own careers and families, my mother in law looked forward to the holidays when she could make huge dinners and shower her children with gifts of Mason jars filled with pickles, ginger-peach jam, and my husband's favourite, marmalade. These gifts came to an end far too soon; my mother-in-law passed away from cancer shortly after I submitted the first draft of this thesis. At her memorial services, my husband's older brother spoke of his mother's cooking and how many of his most vivid memories of her involved food. As the oldest child he would often "help" her in the kitchen, observing the way she cared for her family through baking, cooking, and preserving. She paused her nursing career to homeschool her oldest three children until they were in high school. She was proud of being a nurse and travelling the world, however I believe her children's memories of her caring for them, especially through food, is exactly how she would want to be remembered.

My mother-in-law rarely showed interest in my academic studies until I told her I was writing about canning and how it should be valued as a craft. I was pleasantly surprised that she found it a worthy topic of study. For my mother-in-law, passing on the tradition of canning and knowing it would be taken up by her daughter and daughters-in-law helped

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[95] Rachael Leow, "Reflections on Feminism, Blogging, and the Historical Profession," *Journal of Women's History* 22, no. 4 (Winter 2010): 239.

validate the time and energy she spent on preserving. While she still had the energy, she made sure to teach her daughter[96] and one of her other daughters-in-law how to make marmalade. My mother-in-law took special pride in her marmalade and although I personally strongly dislike any type of marmalade, I am glad the skill was passed down in the family. Perhaps when the last jar in our fridge runs out I will teach myself how to make it. If the skills of canning and preserving food are not continually passed on or rediscovered they will be lost, and my mother-in-law understood this deeply.

The very act of carrying on the tradition of canning gives value to the foodwork one's female ancestors performed in the past, and in the present. The one food that conjures strong memories of my childhood and my mother's canning is pickles. There is nothing like the taste of homemade dill pickles and I rarely bother buying pickles from the store because I am always left disappointed. They are my number one canning priority; preserving pickles reminds me of the steady supply of vegetables from my parent's huge garden and how we spent most of August and September eating nothing but Greek salad, potatoes, and corn. They remind me of simple, small town life. Likewise, Diane Tye notes that "just as taste defined home while I was growing up, now it takes me home."[97] She explains how making her mother's mustard pickles "tie[s] me as much to another time as to another place. Pickles bring me back to long-ago autumns when I sat on the back step with my mother, and sometimes my grandmother, helping prepare their pickles."[98] Stirring jam was therapeutic and relaxing for me throughout the grieving process after I lost my mother-in-law. I made

[96] My sister in law is several years younger than her older brothers. My mother in law passed away when her sons and daughters in laws were in the midst of new parenthood. My sister in law, who is currently finishing up her undergraduate degree, took a semester off from university to care for her mother.
[97] Diane Tye, *Baking as Biography: A Life Story in Recipes* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens UP, 2010), 195.
[98] Tye, *Baking as Biography*, 195.

strawberry rhubarb jam with vanilla bean and balsamic, dill pickle relish, and bread and butter pickles while thinking of the thousands of jars she filled in her lifetime. Female ancestors live on not only through the act of remembering, but also through the production of 'putting up' fruits and vegetables for the winter.

In their study of food preservation, Melissa A. Click and Ronit Ridberg found that their interviewees had "deep emotional ties to the process and the product" and that several of them "described their food-preservation practices as extensions of family traditions."[99] Below a picture of rows of her home canning Lugonja writes, "I really do believe that the shelves above were my homage to Grandma Maude, as preserving Canadian food traditions from one generation to another provides a connection to those that came before in a very intimate manner. I have preserved memories of my Grandma Maude in every single jar in my pantry."[100] Even though I do not like marmalade I have an emotional tie to the last Mason jars my mother-in-law filled. I feel it is my responsibility as someone who likes to cook and can to keep her food traditions alive and gift my siblings-in-law with gifts of canning at Christmas. For many home preservers, including myself, canning is even more meaningful when it has been passed on through the generations.

The Enduring Power of Little House on the Prairie

Many canning and homesteading blogs and cookbooks refer to a 'simpler time' or 'getting back to our roots,' and Ma Ingalls and *The Little House on the Prairie* books are a strong influence for some bloggers in the canning/homesteading blogosphere. Meg of *Grow and Resist* asks, "'Homestead.' What image does the word conjure up for you? An urban

[99] Melissa A. Click and Ronit Ridberg, "Saving Food: Food Preservation as Alternative Food Activism," *Environmental Communication* 4, no. 3 (September 2010): 313.
[100] Lugonja, "The Canadian Food Experience Project Challenge Five: Preserving."

garden and a bent for gaining self-sufficiency? A white hippie co-opting dreads, going all natural and eating sprouts? Laura Ingalls and *The Little House on the Prairie*?"[101] Below these questions is a trailer for the hit 1970s TV show based on Laura Ingalls Wilder's books. The Ingalls family is one of the first images that comes to mind when I think of homesteading and the pioneer days. The enduring appeal of the *Little House on the Prairie* books lives on in some canning and homesteading blogs.

In the late 1930s and early 1940s Laura Ingalls Wilder wrote eight children's novels about her life as a pioneer girl. Cannon argues that "the books shaped young readers' understanding of homesteading and pioneering for generations. Wilder structured her novels to emphasize what she called "the values of life": "courage, self-reliance, independence, integrity, helpfulness" and "cheerfulness and humor." Consequently, most readers came away from the books with positive impressions of homesteading although Wilder and her husband had actually lost their homestead."[102] I was one of the many children to be swept away by the pioneer girl who lived on the prairies; *On the Banks of Plum Creek* spurred my love of all things nineteenth century and historical fiction in general.

While *Plum Creek* will always be one of my favourite Laura Ingalls books, it is the food scenes in *Little House in the Big Woods* that absolutely fascinated me when I was a young girl and still resonate with me today. The descriptions of smoking venison with fresh hickory chips, churning cream and dyeing and molding the butter, and baking miniature loaves of bread all seemed wondrous and delicious. I imagined that the little house must have been the coziest place on earth with its attic stuffed to the rafters with delectable meat, herbs and vegetables: Wilder pens, "the attic was a lovely place to play. The large, round, colored

[101] "Meg," "Homestead Act 2.0."
[102] Cannon, "Homesteading Remembered," 9.

pumpkins made beautiful chairs and tables. The red peppers and the onions dangled overhead. The hams and the venison hung in their paper wrappings, and all the bunches of dried herbs, the spicy herbs for cooking and the bitter herbs for medicine, gave the place a dusty-spicy smell."[103] Holly Blackford, a scholar of children's literature, also writes that "The attic's cornucopia of plenty meant everything to me, and I liked the book's evocation of being safe in a kind of maternal, edible womb."[104]

The descriptions of the attic bursting with food are powerful images of self-sufficiency, hard work, and nurturance. The knowledge that Pa and Ma Ingalls had to grow, process, and preserve food is memorable and inspiring. As Blackford notes, "The Ingalls family can make everything from bread to bullets, houses to music, clothing to sugar – and make it seem fun, too."[105] *Little House in the Big Woods* exudes a self-reliant way of life where every member of the family has a role to play in keeping everyone safe, warm, and well-fed. Ingalls writes, "All alone in the wild Big Woods, and the snow, and the cold, the little log house was warm and snug and cosy. Pa and Ma and Mary and Laura and Baby Carrie were comfortable and happy there, especially at night."[106] It is not surprising that the *Little House* books are a source of inspiration for some women in their modern homesteading endeavours.

Melissa K. Norris, author of the blog *Living Homegrown and Handmade*, is an avid lifelong fan of the *Little House on the Prairie* books; she lives on her own homestead in the Cascade Mountains in the United States. She describes herself as "a plain country girl who

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[103] Laura Ingalls Wilder, *Little House in the Big Woods* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994), 19.
[104] Holly Blackford, "Civilization and Her Discontents: The Unsettling Nature of Ma in *Little House in the Big Woods*," *Frontiers* 29, no. 1 (2008): 147.
[105] Blackford, "Civilization and Her Discontents," 155.
[106] Ingalls, *Little House in the Big Woods*, 38.

loves Jesus, playing in the dirt, stuffing food into Mason jars…hunting down as many traditional old-fashioned skills as I can to put into use on our homestead."[107] Along with being a blogger, podcaster and homesteader, Norris is also a newspaper columnist and radio show host. She has written books and e-guides on preserving, homesteading, and living life from scratch.

Norris wrote a post entitled "8 Ways to Live Like *Little House on the Prairie*;" she begins, "Laura Ingalls Wilder was my best friend growing up and I always wanted to live like they did on *Little House on the Prairie*®." Her third tip for living like Laura, after cooking from scratch and growing a garden, is preserving food; Norris notes, "My favorite [method] is canning. There's just something about all those pretty jars filled with food sitting on the shelf. Plus, I'm a self-proclaimed-no-shame-in-it admitted canning addict. Home canned food is frugal, especially when you grow it yourself, and makes cooking from scratch extremely easy because all you have to do is open a jar and heat on those nights you're pressed for time or plain don't feel like cooking."[108] The allure of the well-stocked homestead glows from the pages of the *Little House on the Prairie* books, and Norris channels it in her blog and in her own life.

Merissa Arink runs the homesteading blog *Little House Living*; she has also published a book with the same title. She writes on her "About" page, "I'm a true country girl at heart. I make my sun tea in an old gallon pickle jar and walk barefoot everywhere in the summer. Since we live a ways from town we usually just have to make the best with what we have.

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[107] Melissa K. Norris, "About," *Living Homegrown and Handmade* (blog), accessed June 25, 2020 http://melissaknorris.com/about/.

[108] Melissa K. Norris, "8 Ways to Live Like Little House on the Prairie," *Living Homegrown and Handmade* (blog), (accessed January 21, 2018) https://melissaknorris.com/livelikelittlehouseontheprairie/.

Growing up my mom taught me a lot of great homemaking skills … and I'm definitely using the skills I learned. I have a huge garden and I enjoy preserving the bounty."[109] The basis of Arink's blog is frugal living in the form of making one's own household cleaning and personal care products, cooking from scratch, canning, and sewing simple items such as aprons. The blog's name borrows directly from the *Little House on the Prairie* books and Arink proclaims that "there is so much to be learned from the Little House books! As I read through the books I've been inspired by the heroic (in my opinion!) acts and the bravery of the pioneers."[110] One section of her website is dedicated to blog posts about the lessons that can be learned from each *Little House* book. In a post titled "Living Like Little House in the Big Woods" Arink admires Ma Ingall's skills at storing food and references the same passage about the attic that I quoted earlier; she notes that the book "paints a pretty picture of Ma's winter storage.[111] The idea of being able to be at least partially self-sufficient by growing one's own food and "putting it up" for the winter is incredibly appealing to fans of the *Little House on the Prairie* books.

Like Norris and Arink, I still get swept away to another era by the *Little House* books; however, I now view them more critically. In regard to a "simpler time," what strikes me now as an adult is how often the Ingalls moved in search of the elusive perfect homestead and the many unexpected tragedies they faced. The Ingalls were part of the migration of settlers who tried to homestead on inhospitable land. *Little House on the Prairie* was my least favourite book because I hated that the Ingalls left the coziness of their home in the Big

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[109] Merissa Arink, "About Me & Little House Living," *Little House Living* (blog), accessed January 21, 2018 https://www.littlehouseliving.com/about.
[110] Merissa Arink, "Living Like Little House," *Little House Living* (blog), accessed January 21, 2018 (https://www.littlehouseliving.com/living-like-little-house.
[111] Merissa Arink, "Living Like Little House in the Big Woods," *Little House Living* (blog), November 19, 2019 https://www.littlehouseliving.com/living-like-little-house-in-the-big-woods.html.

Woods to start all over again on the lonely and sweeping prairie. Blackford argues, "For the reader, Big Woods results in a novel that retrospectively marks an idyllic pioneer paradise before the "fall" of time and journeying West, where the trials of survival and growing up take narrative precedence." This accurately summarizes my reading experience of the books as a child.

"Journeying West" also embodies Manifest Destiny, which was a doctrine first espoused in 1845 by a democratic politician that America was destined by God to settle the entirety of the continent; "central to Manifest Destiny was the assumption that white Americans were a special people, a view that dated back to the Puritans' belief that God had appointed them to establish a New Israel cleansed of the corruption of the Old World."[112] White Americans believed it was their mission to spread their way of life and new form of self-government across North America and be an example to the world.[113] Writing about and participating in pioneer activities must simultaneously involve seriously reflecting on colonial history and the injustices that made the "Pioneer Days" possible. As Meg of *Grow and Resist* asserts, "I'm into the activities [of urban homesteading]. Use of the word homestead… not so much. The word is capital-L-loaded. Loaded with history, loaded with power, loaded with privilege."[114] Meg is my inspiration for taking part in gardening and canning while being mindful of my white settler history and choosing not to use the term "urban homesteading" to describe what I do.

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[112] Goldfield et. al., *The American Journey*, 359-360.
[113] From Goldfield et. al., *The American Journey*: "Between 1815 and 1850, the term "Anglo-Saxon," originally loosely applied to English-speaking peoples, acquired racial overtones. Caucasian Anglo-Saxon Americans, as the descendants of ancient Germanic tribes that had purportedly brought the seeds of free institutions to England, were now said to be the foremost race in the world. The superior racial pedigree they claimed for themselves gave white Americans the natural right to expand westward, a chosen people carrying the blessings of democracy and progress," 360-361.
[114] Meg, "Homestead Act 2.0," *Grow and Resist*.

Blogs that focus on "pioneer living" also reinforce the narrative that canning was a necessity in the past and that it is a choice in the present. Danille Elise Christensen challenges the assumption found in blogs, newspaper articles, and even history projects that canning was once a necessity, but now it is a choice. She stresses that she does not want to paint the often exhausting work of home preserving in romantic terms; however she argues that "archival work suggests that reducing past rural domestic practice to duty or deprivation alone ignores the agency and aesthetic sophistication of people already marginalized by gender, region, race, and other contributors to socioeconomic status."[115] To assume that women in the rural past took no creative pride in their canning endeavours is short sighted, and it contributes to the narrative that our mothers' and grandmothers' generations were only ever working in the kitchen to take care of their families. Christensen's research puts a spotlight on rural, Southern women who loved – and still love- to can; Rovertie Bolen Wills of West Virginia spoke in a 1979 interview about how "she preferred the quick, high-yield canning she'd done using metal cans at a community canning center – yet she also detailed at great length her aesthetic preferences concerning the preparation and display of food jarred in glass."[116] Christensen's research on Wills complicates the idea that twenty-first century, young, urban dwellers are the only people who have ever canned for aesthetic reasons.

A Canadian example of Christensen's analysis can be found in one of Canada's national newspapers, *The Globe and Mail*. In October 1970, journalists from *The Globe and Mail* visited five farm wives to investigate their way of life in a modern era of new technology, second wave feminism, and interest in going 'back to the land'.[117] I want to

[115] Christensen, "Simply Necessity?," 18.
[116] Christensen, "Simply Necessity?," 23-24.
[117] Joyce Carter, "The Life of Today's Farm Wife," *The Globe and Mail*, October 15, 1970, W1, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

highlight the article here as a miniature case study for further critiquing the necessity/choice dichotomy. The journalists report: "the second thing you [the farm wives] rarely if ever do is have an egg route, or bake bread, or make butter. "What would anyone do that for, any more?" And when you tell them that the cities are filled with back-to-nature romantics who yearn for the Thoreusque joys of eating the food they've raised for themselves, they tell you "They don't know how hard the work is."[118] The farm wives enjoyed their rural lives but embraced technology that made their work and lifestyle easier and more comfortable.

Mrs. Francis Walsh told the reporters that "'I don't can anything but pickles and jam any more.'" She had freezers full of beef, fruits, and vegetables. However, the journalists note how she "insist[ed] that we obviously deprived city folk take home sealers of her chili sauce and hot dog relish."[119] This gesture demonstrates that even though Walsh used her freezers to make preserving food easier, she still took pride in her pickling and jamming. The "deprived city folk" comment implies that Walsh felt preserves like hers could not be purchased in the city, and she was probably right in the new era of supermarket shopping. In the photograph of Walsh for the article she is surrounded by Mason jars with four in her arms and a smile on her face; although the tagline beneath her photo ironically reads "'Why should we do it the hard way?'" Another farm wife, Pamela Pind, said that she "had to keep canning" because her sons took excellent care of their tomato plants and she wanted "to be fair to them." The journalists write that "her canning and preserving efforts far outweigh those of the more traditional farm wives we've visited."[120] Canning was likely not a necessity for Pind, but she did not want her sons' homegrown tomatoes to go to waste.

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[118] Carter, "The Life of Today's Farm Wife."
[119] Carter, "The Life of Today's Farm Wife."
[120] Carter, "The Life of Today's Farm Wife."

Christensen's research and *The Globe and Mail* article make evident that ignoring the motives and attitudes of rural and farming women towards canning distorts the past. These women did welcome new technology that made freezing food possible, but they also took pride in their canning skills and recipes. Christensen also asserts that while it is wrong to assume that "play, pleasure, and beauty are the exclusive property of the young, urban, and well-to-do," it is also "dangerous to assume that contemporary DIY efforts are nothing *more* than play (emphasis original)."[121] As will be discussed in the chapter on twenty-first century domesticity, canning bloggers and cookbook authors take their preserving work seriously and see great value in it. Also, for women who urban homestead, canning is a necessity in order to use up the surplus of their gardens. Defining canning in terms of necessity vs. choice is an oversimplification of both the past and the present.

Conclusion

When anthropologist David E. Sutton first brought up the idea of academically studying food and memory in the 1990s he was met with skepticism and derision; a fellow anthropologist sarcastically told him to read Proust.[122] In Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*, the protagonist experiences the infamous "Madeleine moment," when a spoonful of tea and Madeleine cake ignites powerful memories of his aunt.[123] Proust transcribes,

> But when from a long-distant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, still, alone, more fragile, but with more vitality, more unsubstantial, more persistent, more faithful, the smell and taste of things remain poised a long time, like souls, ready to remind us, waiting and hoping for their

[121] Christensen, "Simply Necessity?," 39.
[122] David E. Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory* (Oxford & New York: Berg, 2011), 1.
[123] Marcel Proust, Translated by C. K. Sott Moncrieff, "Swann's Way," *Remembrance of Things Past, Volume One* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1922), 28.

> moment, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unfaltering, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection.[124]

For many canning enthusiasts, their Madeleine moments come from popping the lid of a Mason jar and taking a bite of a juicy golden peach or eating a spoonful of ruby red strawberry jam. Grandmothers, aunts, and mothers pass away, but they live on through food memories.

Sutton strongly believed in this connection between food and memory,[125] as do I. He ruminates, "food memories work through the mutual reinforcement of the cosmic and the mundane, feeding the dead and feeding the living."[126] Ancestors are brought to life through memories of their food. While I do not want to remember my female relatives solely for their food work, I do wish to bring value to the hours they spent in the kitchen. Canning is a part of my family heritage, a form of crafts(wo)manship, and a source of pride and peace of mind in knowing that my family has food laid away. As a teenager, I did not place a high value on work done within the home. As I grew older and studied women's history, I began to appreciate the work of my female relatives. They are incredibly skilled sewers, bakers, cooks, and preservers. It bothered me that the work of the female mentors in my life often went unappreciated, and this had an influence on my decision to write an entire thesis on home canning.

Still, after writing this thesis it now bothers me that all I know of my grandmother is her food, and her caring work of being the mother to nine children and the grandmother to twenty-seven grandchildren. She passed away when I was nineteen and I wish that I had

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[124] Proust, "Swann's Way," 29.
[125] Despite the initial lack of support he received, David E. Sutton conducted research in Kalymnos, Greece that led to his book *Remembrance of Repasts.*
[126] Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts*, 159.

asked her more questions about her life when I was a teenager. I wish that I had not defined her only as a home cook and a grandmother. Yet, I am encouraged by Hirsch and Smith's assertion that "feminist narratives can thus resituate the politics of nostalgia by recuperating devalued, marginalized, or repressed cultural formations."[127] My canning work is partly about honouring her memory and her skill; she is the only person I know who canned salmon. I can also honour her poetry by developing my writing skills, and this thesis is partly about giving value to all her work.

[127] Hirsch and Smith, "Feminism and Cultural Memory," 9.

CHAPTER TWO

Canning, DIY Domesticity, and Third Wave Feminism

> *"And a couple of summers ago, when most of my house was pretty much built and a lot of my tiny farm had some food squirting out of it, I actually did the "D" word ("Domestic" for those of you who don't use the word often) and bought myself some canning jars. That first summer of testing out my hidden domestic, I headed down to Val's old farm and she taught me to pressure can a salmon or two. I brought the jars home and lined them up in my cupboard. I admired them and they gleamed back at me."*[128]

To choose to take up the home arts such as preserving is a matter of contention. The rediscovering of traditional domestic skills has caused some journalists to wonder if this is a return to the drudgery of the kitchen for women; others have declared that food preservation is a frivolous, unnecessary pastime. Furthermore, their motives for embarking on work-within-the-home are strongly questioned or not taken seriously. In an article for *Slate*, Sara Dickerman denounces the home canning trend as being primarily narcissistic: "These culinary trophies are emblematic of a project-based food relationship that we urban food junkies are prone to indulge these days: athletic all-weekend bouts of cheesemaking, or bacon curing, or jam and pickle making are so much more bloggable and boastworthy than making a decent brown-bag lunch five days in a row."[129] She sees little value in canning beyond boosting one's foodie bragging rights.

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[128] Robin Wheeler, *Food Security for the Faint of Heart: Keeping Your Larder Full in Lean Times* (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 2008), 20. The biography on her publisher's website notes that "Robin Wheeler was a permaculture activist, author, teacher and founder of the Sustainable Living Arts School. She taught traditional skills, sustenance gardening and medicinals at Edible Landscapes…a nursery and teaching garden in Roberts Creek, British Columbia." New Society Publishers, "Robin Wheeler," (https://www.newsociety.com/Contributors/W/Wheeler-Robin) accessed January 14, 2017. Sadly, Wheeler passed away in 2012. She left a legacy of valuing gardening, preserving, and food security.

[129] Sara Dickerman, "Can It," *Slate*, March 10, 2010, http://www.slate.com/articles/life/food/2010/03/can_it.html).

The title of an op-ed by Emily Matchar for *The Washington Post* asks, "The new domesticity: Fun, empowering or a step back for American women?" In the article Matchar questions and analyzes the motives for embracing what she terms the 'new domesticity'[130] and worries in her conclusion that what appears now to be a choice could easily turn into an obligation. She notes how her "baby boomer mother does not can jam. Or bake bread. Or knit. Or sew. Nor did my grandmother, a 1960s housewife of the cigarette-in-one-hand-cocktail-in-the-other variety, who saw convenience food as a liberation from her immigrant mother's domestic burdens."[131] Seemingly simple jars of jam are causing journalists to write strong opinions about the topic in major American publications that question the motives of the women – and also men – who participate in jam making.

Gender and domesticity are being redefined by a new generation of DIY-ers. The home canners highlighted in this chapter view their efforts as a way forward to a future that places value on domestic skills and the ability to make and create using one's own hands. They do not view canning as frivolous or a step back in time. Likewise, Cairns and Johnston found in their research that "some women have reclaimed foodwork as a site of pleasure and empowerment. Instead of rejecting a homemade dinner as a sign of oppression, old-fashioned domestic skills – like canning, making jam, and baking pies – have been reframed as hip, handy, and fun."[132] The "hip and handy" woman who cans, jams, and bakes is celebrated in canning blogs and cookbooks.

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[130] Matchar's article turned into a book titled *Homeward Bound: Why Women are Embracing the New Domesticity,* New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013.
[131] Emily Matchar, "The new domesticity: Fun, empowering or a step back for American women?," *The Washington Post*, November 25, 2011, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-new-domesticity-fun-empowering-or-a-step-back-for-american-women/2011/11/18/gIQAqkg1vN_story.html.
[132] Cairns and Johnston, *Food and Femininity*, 11.

To be able to "put up" one's own food is an art and a science that takes knowledge and skill – in part because a mishap could make someone seriously ill from food poisoning. Also, as demonstrated by Danille Elise Christensen, many women can because it is enjoyable, and they take great pride in their work. In her essay, the photographs of Mason jars adorned with blue ribbons speak to the skill and artistry that goes into each batch of canning.[133] I am terrible at drawing or painting but when I see my kitchen table loaded down with dill pickles, Okanagan peaches, and blackberry jam, I feel enormously proud of my efforts and the fact that I am carrying on a family tradition. As Christensen asserts, "Craft satisfaction – pride in a materially productive task well done – is one reason for finding enjoyment in such hard work."[134] Although canning is not always an easy job there is an end reward of seeing rows of colourful jars lined up in a pantry. This finished product that lasts through the winter is what separates canning from ordinary cooking and places it more in the category of crafting and other DIY activities.

The DIY movement of the 1990s – a movement that was embraced by many third wave feminists - brought attention to the domestic arts and the skill and knowledge that is required to create using one's own hands. When *BUST* magazine launched in 1993 the creators did not intend on having a strong DIY component, but in 1997 they created a new DIY column titled "She's Crafty," an oddity for a feminist magazine. Debbie Stoller, one of the creators of *BUST,* explains the reasoning behind this decision in *The Bust DIY Guide to Life*:

> "Rather than rejecting all those things that our feminist foremothers had considered oppressive, we chose to re-examine them, and sometimes reclaim them, making them

[133] See Danille Elise Christensen, "Simply Necessity? Agency and Aesthetics in Southern Home Canning," Southern Cultures (Spring 2015): 15-42.
[134] Christensen, "Simply Necessity?," 22.

> our own. Was sewing really such a suffocating and unsatisfying task, or did it just seem oppressive because women had been limited to performing this task and held back from performing others? And was this sense of oppression multiplied by the fact that the tasks themselves weren't given much value? After all, the women who performed this work were never really given credit for their skill and experience. We found ourselves thinking, as feminists, that instead of shutting the door on these skills, perhaps we should be celebrating them."[135]

The DIY movement and the explosion of food and homemaking blogs has made it more acceptable to embrace making jam. Canning is now in the mainstream as a respected kitchen craft - perhaps not in all social circles; however, in my town, making a blackberry-jalapeño jelly would certainly be considered hip, economical (blackberries are weeds here), and sticking it to the (corporate) man. In 2001, *BUST* unapologetically published an entire issue on the "womanly arts" and Debbie Stoller, a creator of the magazine, notes that "our readers rejoiced, many letting us know how grateful they were to see proof that feminism and the home front need not be at odds with each other."[136]

I agree that feminism has a complicated relationship with domesticity, but I disagree with the conjecture that feminism caused the devaluation of women's work within the home. Likewise, in her examination of knitting and third-wave feminist magazines, Elizabeth Groeneveld argues that "the refiguring of knitting as feminist relies on an assumption that feminists have historically devalued domestic activities."[137] This presumption ignores historical context. In "Family and Domesticity," Alice Julier discusses the history of how household labour was devalued as men began to work for wages outside the home. She explains, "reliance on the marketplace for goods…created a gendered dependence whereby

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[135] Debbie Stoller, "Introduction," In *The BUST DIY Guide to Life: Making Your Way Through the Every Day*, edited by Laurie Henzel and Debbie Stoller, 7-11 (New York: Stewart, Tabori, & Chang, 2011), 9.
[136] Stoller, "Introduction," 10.
[137] Elizabeth Groeneveld, "Join the Knitting Revolution": Third-Wave Feminist Magazines and the Politics of Domesticity," *Canadian Review of American Studies* 40, no. 2 (2010): 268.

women did not receive wages for their labors within the home, and men were excused from them by the nature of their work outside the home. While food labors and cooking were still highly valued as part of family life, the shift reinforced a gendered division of labor which suggested that unpaid work done in the household was less critical than work done for wages."[138] In her classic book on women's work in the home, historian Meg Luxton discusses the invisibility of housework and how it is not actually considered work, but a "labour of love."[139] She argues, "as a "labour of love," this work is not respected in the same way as wage work, partly because it is not directly supervised and because its standards and schedules seem to be determined by the women who do it…on the one hand, it is important, necessary and potentially satisfying. On the other hand, it has a low status and is often isolating and frustrating."[140] The gendered division of paid and unpaid labour caused domestic activities to be deemed less important.

Joanne Hollows researched media backlash to domesticity for her article on Nigella Lawson, postfeminism, and cooking; she explains that the publication of Lawson's *How to Be a Domestic Goddess* "provoked a huge debate in the press about the relationship between feminism, femininity, and baking."[141] The reaction to the cookbook reinforced the feminist/housewife dichotomy – Hollows refers to the housewife as "the feminist's cake baking 'other'."[142] Within feminism, cooking and baking has primarily been viewed in terms

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[138] Alice Julier, "Family and Domesticity," In *A Cultural History of Food: The Modern Age*, edited by Amy Bentley, 145-163 (London: Berg, 2012), 149.
[139] Meg Luxton, *More Than A Labour of Love: Three Generations of Women's Work in the Home* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1980, 2009), 11.
[140] Luxton, *More Than A Labour of Love*, 12.
[141] Joanne Hollows, "Feeling Like a Domestic Goddess: Postfeminism and Cooking," *European Journal of* Cultural Studies 6, no. 2 (2003): 180.
[142] Hollows, "Feeling Like a Domestic Goddess," 180.

of servitude and caring for others. Hollows argues that cooking does not need to be completely at odds with feminism:

> The representation of a mode of femininity that is based around cooking and eating as pleasure, rather than servitude and denial, may begin to offer a way of experiencing cooking and eating differently. It also provides an alternative means of representing women's relationship with food to that offered by (some very good) feminist criticism. Furthermore, for this author at least, while there are times when I want to feel 'like a feminist,' there are other times when I really do want to feel 'like a domestic goddess'."[143]

From following Nigella Lawson on Instagram and reading a few of her cookbooks, I personally feel like Lawson gives me permission as a feminist and a foodie to make a chocolate cake entirely because I am craving a giant slice, not because I am obligated to bake for someone else. She gives women permission to make cake and eat it too, for the sheer pleasure of a piece of chocolate indulgence.[144]

Recently at 10:00PM I decided I simply had to open a jar of strawberry preserves I made last summer. I ate them straight out of the jar and for me it was a "Nigella moment" – enjoying a late-night snack of something special I had made simply because I was craving them. Cairns and Johnston assert that "when women in our study described cooking as pleasurable in its own right…they tended to emphasize the embodied practice of making food. These embodied narratives ranged from the "meditative" pleasures of chopping to the

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[143] Hollows, "Feeling Like a Domestic Goddess," 197.

[144] Nigella Lawson once said in an interview, "When I wrote *How to Be a Domestic Goddess*, many felt I was saying that women's place was in the kitchen, but the ironic pictures on the endpapers surely undermined that, except for those people who consciously chose to misread my intent. Feeling comfortable in the kitchen is essential for everyone, male or female. At the time it seemed so many people were fearful of cooking, and that meant home was never more than a stop-off from work. Women of my generation were keen – rightly – not to be tied to the stove, but the ramifications of this were that they felt a sense of dread in the kitchen. How can this be good for anyone? *I also feel that to denigrate any activity because it has traditionally been associated with the female sphere is in itself anti-feminist* (Italics mine)," Elizabeth Day, "Nigella Lawson: 'I'm not a chef – I'm not even trained,'" *The Guardian*, October 19, 2013, https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2013/oct/19/nigella-lawson-chef-feminism-interview.

"therapeutic" experience of kneading dough and the sensory joys of home canning."[145] With my strawberry preserves the 'sensory joys' came from teaching myself the technique of cooking them so that the strawberries stayed whole, rather than turning to mush. I was so proud when the jars shone back at me containing two pounds each of glistening strawberries, which I later enjoyed during a snowstorm in February, creating another moment of sensory joy.

Canning for pleasure is evident in the world of food blogs and preserving cookbooks. Aimée Wimbush-Bourque writes on *Simple Bites*, "I'll admit it, making my own jam is a huge boost to the 'Holly Homemaker' in me. I just love how much like a domestic goddess I feel when I hear those jars go POP as they seal."[146] For myself, that is one of the most satisfying moments of canning. Hearing the jar lids 'pop' is the moment of truth that makes all the hours of canning worth it. Robin Wheeler's tongue in cheek classification of 'domesticity' as a swear word demonstrates how much it is valued in Western society. However, she proudly writes of the satisfaction to be found in canning salmon and dabbling in the domestic. She notes, "I cannot tell you how satisfying it is to gaze on a row of full preserve jars."[147] The word choices of Wimbush-Bourque and Wheeler suggest that they know their love of canning may not be taken seriously, but they give their readers permission to also take pride and pleasure in domestic activities.

Gardening, cooking, and canning are all activities I enjoy. Occasionally they feel like chores, because sometimes gardening and cooking must be done even when I do not feel like doing either activity. A few summers ago when I made blackberry-vanilla bean jam I had fun

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[145] Cairns and Johnston, *Food and Femininity*, 151.
[146] Aimée Wimbush-Bourque, "Q & A: Why Do You Can?," *Simple Bites* (blog) July 9, 2010, (http://www.simplebites.net/q-a-why-do-you-can/.
[147] Wheeler, *Food Security For the Faint of Heart*, 21.

while jamming, but canning it felt like a chore because I was in a rush to get the process finished and a jar broke inside the canner. There were a few colourful words said that afternoon. But one of my jars made it to Namibia, Africa with a friend who went to visit her family, and they ate the whole jar with breakfast one morning. I take pride in that. Blogger and preserver Theresa Loe notes, "canning and preserving is a great way to extend the "story" of your own garden. By passing on a jar of deliciousness to a friend, you are giving a bit of your garden and yourself. And that, my friends, is one of the best benefits of all!"[148] When I gift a jar of home canning I am essentially saying, "canning is a skill I have that I am proud of, and I am lucky that it was taught to me. I want to share it with you."

To Pierre Bourdieu, this would be embodied capital, the form of capital that is second nature to a person and contained in her body.[149] He would likely argue that canning comes naturally to me because I learned these skills from a young age. In *Distinction*, Bourdieu argues that our tastes – in food, art, music, and so forth – are markers of social class.[150] At first glance, this thesis could appear to be written by an upper middle class academic suddenly interested in the "revival" of the domestic arts. In an article titled "Co-opting the Coop," Marianne Kirby notes how the "media focuses on middle- and upper-class craft revival stories without acknowledging those who have preserved these skills in the first place."[151] But my skill and interest in canning stems from the fact that I am a working class

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[148] Theresa Loe, "What is all this talk about Canning?," *Growing a Greener World*, August 19, 2010, http://www.growingagreenerworld.com/canning-preserving/.

[149] Pierre Bourdieu was one of the most influential sociologists of the twentieth century. See the article "Cultural Capital," in Social Theory Rewired for an explanation of Bourdieu's concept of the habitus and the three forms of cultural capital: the embodied, the objectified, and the institutionalized (accessed June 18, 2020).

[150] See Pierre Bourdieu, "Introduction," in *Distinction: A social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Translated by Richard Nice, Routledge: New York, 1984.

[151] Marianne Kirby, "Co-opting the Coop," *Bitch Media*, November 21, 2012, https://www.bitchmedia.org/article/co-opting-the-coop.

kid whose family gardened and canned to save money, and because that is how my mother grew up. She absorbed the embodied capital of my grandmother who lived through the Great Depression and raised nine children. She never wasted a drop of food, and neither does my mom. My mom and stepdad have also always been adamant that the homegrown and homemade tastes better than store bought; therefore my family canned out of necessity but also from the belief that store bought food was inferior. This is embodied in me by the fact that I will not buy store bought pickles because they do not taste anything like homemade ones. Freshness and flavour are two of my main motivations for canning.

"New Domesticity" or "Punk Domesticity?"

In "The New Domesticity," Emily Matchar details her own forays into homemaking: "I'm planning on canning homemade jam this holiday season, swept up in the same do-it-yourself zeitgeist that seems to have carried off half my female friends. I picked and froze the berries this summer, and I've been squirreling away flats of Ball jars under my kitchen sink for months."[152] Although Matchar classifies the current interest in canning, baking, knitting, and DIY-ing as "the new domesticity," referring to this movement as new is problematic as it ignores the DIY movement of the late 1990s and the back to the land movement of the 1960s. As will be discussed in the chapter on urban homesteading, none of these trends are truly "new." I prefer the term "punk domesticity," as borrowed from Sean Timberlake, the creator of the community-based preserving website *Punk Domestics,* who in turn borrowed the phrase from a review of Karen Solomon's preserving and pantry staples cookbook.[153] The book review on *Eat Me Daily* states that Karen Solomon's pantry

[152] Emily Matchar, "The New Domesticity."
[153] Sean Timberlake "About Punk Domestics," *Punk Domestics* (blog), accessed April 5, 2018 (https://archive.punkdomestics.com/content/about.html.

cookbook "owes a debt to depression-era canning pamphlets as much as to the punk domesticity of the hipster DIY movement."[154] Sean Timberlake created *Punk Domestics* for "DIY food enthusiast[s]" to contribute their recipes; along with canning, there are tutorials and recipes on his website for smoking meat, brewing beer and kombucha, making cheese, and foraging.

I would characterize this "punk domesticity" as the desire to rebel against companies like Kraft and Campbell and the entire realm of convenience and fast food. It is about stubbornly saying, "I can do it myself." Qualifying it as punk separates it from the dominating and enduring image of 1950s domesticity. Within punk domesticity men can be in the kitchen and women can get their hands and clothes dirty. *Punk Domestics* notes that "increasingly people are trying their hand at the old foodways. We are making jam, curing meats, raising chickens. This is not anathema to modernity; it is an imperative part of it. We are preserving: food, culture, community, ourselves. We are celebrating our punk domesticity."[155] "Inventiveness" and "creativity" are the key aspirations of punk DIY foodies and preservers.

In the introduction to *Jam It*, Solomon explains that she created the cookbook she always wanted to buy; the kind that would teach her how to thwart "Big Mayo" and other processed food stuffs. She pens, "stocking the pantry and our own refrigerator doors with ingredients that were made by hand for centuries should not be so cumbersome. Here, I hope to share the joy of real, obtainable DIY kitchen crafting projects at their best. I hope you are

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[154]Helen Rosner, "Jam Packed: *Jam It, Pickle It,* Cure It by Karen Solomon [book review]," *Eat Me Daily*, June 24, 2009, (http://www.eatmedaily.com/2009/06/jam-packed-jam-it-pickle-it-cure-it-by-karen-solomon-book-review/).

[155] Sean Timberlake, "Yes We Can (And Pickle and Jam!)," *Punk Domestics*, June 18, 2010, (https://archive.punkdomestics.com/content/yes-we-can-and-pickle-and-jam.html).

moved to grab a wooden spoon and a jar because food crafts are fun."[156] Solomon's cookbook could be the preserving companion to *BUST's DIY Guide to Life*. I am going to borrow a term straight from Solomon for this thesis: kitchen crafters. She describes herself as "a crafter and food is my medium of choice."[157] Canning is a form of crafting in the kitchen that is being embraced by DIY foodies. It is hipster-esque in its quest for authenticity, the desire to eschew big brands such as Miracle Whip, and the desire to say, "this is handmade." Although she is critical of the white middle-class connotations of DIY culture within third wave feminism,[158] Groeneveld asserts that "in terms of their political potential, third-wave crafting practices do offer an alternative to mass-produced products sold by multinational corporations and reassert the value of the art of making one's own goods."[159]

The postwar era taught women to be consumers of commercial foods and to purchase rather than produce. As Julier states, in the 1950s "American women, immigrant or native born, were pushed by the food industry desperate to sell products, into embracing a contradictory ethos of care and convenience embodied by meals in tin-foil trays."[160] This also occurred in Canada. The cover of the 1955 cookbook *Appetizing Recipes Using Canada's Canned Foods* portrays an image of white middle class prosperity and motherhood – mother and daughter in matching aprons with a large pantry completely stocked with store bought canned goods behind them. The mother is pointing at a recipe in a cookbook while

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[156] Karen Solomon, *Jam It, Pickle It, Cure It: And Other Cooking Projects* (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2009), 1.
[157] Solomon, *Jam It, Pickle It, Cure It*, 1.
[158] Groeneveld argues throughout her article that there is a decidedly middle-class component to crafting. She reasons that the average reader of *Venus Zine* and *Bust* is "young, white, urban and middle-class," thus articles on crafting are directed to this audience, "'Join the Knitting Revolution,'" 264-265. She further asserts that "the word "crafting" suggests a skilled activity that requires time and thought and that has value as a potential art form; in this sense, applying the word "crafting" to particular kinds of domestic activities recasts them as not just everyday, menial jobs and thus attributes to them more cultural capital, 264."
[159] Groeneveld, "'Join the Knitting Revolution,'" 267.
[160] Julier, "Family and Domesticity," 149.

the daughter studies it with a can of food tucked under her arm. The cookbook claims that "the average home probably uses a can opener more frequently than any other piece of small equipment in the kitchen."[161] The introduction assures the reader that canned foods retain their nutritional value and that "many women like to use canned foods as an ingredient of interesting recipes. The canner has done the first hard work of preparation, so it is easy to add variety to the menu with very little effort."[162] Julier argues that "making households independent units of consumption was central to the global rise of industrial capitalism."[163] In the consumer culture of Western society, it goes against the grain to make something when one is told repeatedly that buying it is much more convenient.

Thus, if canning is to be considered a throwback to the past, it should also be viewed as a way forward to the future where we rely less on industrial grown and processed food and purchasing everything that we need at the grocery store. In *Radical Homemakers*, Shannon Hayes laments that "we have lost the innate knowledge and traditional crafts essential to countless functions for our daily survival, with the end result being disconnection from our communities and our natural world."[164] Similarly, in her manual *The Hands-On Home*, Erica Strauss writes of how little time is actually spent living in and making a home; the economy makes it possible to outsource all the production that used to be done within the home. She is encouraged, however, by the many people who are beginning to cook and create with their own hands; she argues, "if a movement as diverse as the hands-on-home trend can be said to

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[161] American Can Company, *Appetizing Recipes Using Canada's Canned Foods* (Hamilton: American Can Company, 1955), 45.
[162] American Can Company, *Appetizing Recipes*, 5.
[163] Julier, "Family and Domesticity," 150.
[164] Hayes, *Radical Homemakers*, 82.

have any universal philosophy, it's that as our time and space allow, we nudge our home from consumption to production, from a mentality of "just buy it!" to "let's try to DIY it!"[165]

Strauss wrote a response to Matchar's article in which she discusses "the political act of making dinner." She notes that the article is "excellent," but in answer to Matchar's question, "Could this "new domesticity" start to look like old-fashioned obligation?" Strauss argues, "The enemy of my mother is no longer my enemy. Women of my generation aren't feeling particularly oppressed by Fortune 500 companies that won't promote us past the secretarial pool."[166] She points out that the CEOs of Kraft, PepsiCo, and ADM are all women. However, these companies produce and market food – or "non-food," in the words of Strauss – that is full of refined sugars, preservatives, and additives. She continues, "With a tremendous thank you to the feminists of the Boomer generation, you have succeeded and made possible a world where women can be the enemy every bit as much as the men. When the true fight is with the pervasive influence of a food system gone toxic, it doesn't matter if the hand signing off on the strategic agenda is decorated with a sport length neutral tone spa manicure."[167] Unlike Matchar's grandmother, Strauss does not view convenience food products as a liberation when it is often unhealthy and hardly recognisable as food; rather, she views making dinner as a feminist and political act. She stresses, "Today's radical homemaker feminist shows his or her disapproval for the food, the tactics and the subsidy system that makes corporate box-o-crap food economically possible by pulling household dollars away from these products…we respond by making dinner."[168]

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[165] Erica Strauss, *The Hands-On-Home: A Seasonal Guide to Cooking, Preserving, and Natural Homekeeping* (Seattle: Sasquatch Books, 2015), xix.
[166] Erica Strauss, "The Political Act of Making Dinner," *Northwest Edible Life*, November 28, 2011, https://nwedible.com/political-act-of-making-dinner/.
[167] Strauss, "The Political Act of Making Dinner."
[168] Strauss, "The Political Act of Making Dinner."

Alana Chernila of the blog *Eating From the Ground Up* wrote a response to Dickerman's article; she writes, "I've got to take issue with what seems to me to be a dismissal of the power of the individual kitchen…whatever the product, every time someone is drawn to incorporate real, whole, and homemade food into their lives, you better believe they're shaking their fist at industrial food. Because those acts of filling, preserving, creating, feeding–I really do think it's the actions themselves that create change."[169] Home canning is imbued with meaning in an era where everything is becoming more instant and technological. For many home preservers, canning takes them back to a time when people were aware of what was in their food and took the opportunity to get together with family and friends to preserve it for the winter.

In a blog post aptly titled "Home Canning: Drudgery or Creative Outlet?" Theresa Loe addresses the quote from the "Can It" article as well as Dickerman's comment that canning is "serious drudgery." Loe states, "I do not consider canning/preserving drudgery. Far from it! Just as a real home-cooked meal can be an art form, so too is canning and preserving. It is a creative outlet."[170] For Loe canning is a form of art and a form of food security; it is a method of creating much more flavourful and healthier canned goods than what can be found in a grocery store. Loe emphatically argues, "Industrialized food does not hold a candle to home-canned food in nutrition or flavor. So, yes – I do feel that home canners can shake their fist at industrialized food. Home canners are making a difference in their lives and health by avoiding industrialized food as much as possible. – and for that, I

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[169] Alana Chernila, "Basic Tomato Salsa," *Eating From the Ground Up* (blog), September 13, 2012, http://www.eatingfromthegroundup.com/2012/09/basic-tomato-salsa/.
[170] Theresa Loe, "Home Canning: Drudgery or Creative Outlet?," *Living Home Grown* (blog) accessed June 5, 2017, https://livinghomegrown.com/home-canning-drudgery-or-creative-outlet/.

thank them."[171] I also feel like I am shaking my fist at the food corporations every time I fill up my canner with mason jars of pickles. I am supporting a local farmer up the road by buying his cucumbers, and by making pickles myself I am producing a preservative free food that has not had to travel miles to get to my pantry.

Canning, Creativity, and Community

The Washington State Fruit Commission and Northwest Cherry Growers have a website titled "Sweet Preservation" that provides tutorials on freezing, drying, and canning fruit, as well as instructions on how to host a preservation party. Plans for "the perfect retro-haute party" include inviting guests using personalized paper invitations – "vintage or retro-patterned cardstock makes for the perfect invite, or use a gingham check if you'll be jamming country style" – making cocktails that include the fruit that the guests will be canning at the party, and creating a preservation themed playlist because "no one said karaoke and canning didn't mix."[172] The last step is to "circle around the table and get crafty. Have a variety of labels printed, and pens and decorative ribbons and cloth on hand, so guests can create personalized wrappings to add to their jars when ready."[173] Etsy designers created Mason jar labels for "Sweet Preservation" that home canners can download and print to personalize their jars. The elements for creating this party sound expensive and appear to be more focused on creating a bloggable photo-op rather than actual canning.

The canning parties and the jazzed up Mason jars are the essence of Sara Dickerman's views on preserving: "It's not about producing serious food for the future, and it's not about shaking a fist at industrial food…Rather, it's about making and sharing

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[171] Loe, "Home Canning: Drudgery or Creative Outlet?."
[172] Northwest Cherry Growers, "Preservation Party," accessed November 6, 2017 https://www.nwcherries.com/preservation-party.
[173] Northwest Cherry Growers, "Preservation Party."

delicious, idiosyncratic things that are also, not insignificantly, very pretty."[174] "Serious" food and "pretty" food are mutually exclusive in Dickerman's article; she does not consider twenty-first century canning to be practical or political, rather it is purely beautiful and bloggable. But is it wrong if filled canning jars are pretty? Does this further associate them with femininity and women's work in the kitchen, thus making them less valuable? One of Click and Ridberg's interview participants mentioned how much she loves the sight of one of her cabinet shelves loaded down with filled canning jars, and they assert that "this reflection suggests that a sense of accomplishment is strongly tied to the pleasure of the visual display of canned food."[175] For many home preservers, jars full of home canned food become a form of artwork, a dazzling array of colours that offset the dreariness and greyness of winter. Their prettiness is an added bonus to the pride of having shelves full of home canned food.

When I first read the "Sweet Preservation" tutorial I thought it was over the top in its expectations for the perfect party. While I still feel that the level of detail that the tutorial is encouraging the hostess to achieve is extreme, I am also reminded of Christensen's arguments about community: "it's dangerous to assume that contemporary DIY efforts are nothing more than play. Creative "making" can help to develop relationships that incur the mutual obligation so integral to "community" – even if the making itself is sporadic or solitary."[176] Friendships could be made at a canning party, and making a jar of preserves to give as a gift instead of buying something from a box store certainly constitutes as eschewing consumerism, even if it is only on a small scale. Chernila writes of the meaning that canning in community brings to her life; "When it comes to filling jars, there's also another aspect to

[174] Dickerman, "Can It."
[175] Click and Ridberg, "Saving Food," 314-315.
[176] Christensen, "Simply Necessity?," 39.

it all–what I can only describe as the community piece. I've done a lot of canning with groups of other people. I've learned so much of what I know from the other canners with whom I've stood at the kitchen counter, and all the conversation and experience of those days has gone into the jars with the chutney and applesauce to be reopened later when I need it most."[177] Countless commenters on food blogs have shared their memories of canning with family members, proof that preserving has the ability to bring people together to share the pleasures of homemade food.

Punk Domestics argues that the "movement toward making food a commodity has robbed us of something important: Community. For millenia, food was at the very core of human interaction. It brought families together across generations, extending beyond the grave as recipes were passed from parent to child again and again."[178] This statement, as well as the entire article, glosses over the fact that this foodwork was done primarily by women, but it speaks to the emotions that contemporary DIY preservers are trying to create. In *Brown Eggs and Jam Jars*, Wimbush-Bourque provides instructions on how to organize a jam swap where each guest makes a batch of preserves to contribute, saving everyone the time of individually making several varieties of canned goods. She pens, "everyone takes pride in his or her efforts. You can see it in the way the jars are carried to the table and set out in rows, with an array of decorated tops. You can read it on the faces of these DIY enthusiasts, where a gleam in their eye means "Try mine!""[179] After several rounds of tea, scones, and other

[177] Chernila, "Basic Tomato Salsa."
[178] Timberlake, "Yes We Can!"
[179] Aimée Wimbush-Bourque, *Brown Eggs and Jam Jars: Family Recipes from the Kitchen of Simple Bites* (Toronto: Penguin Group, 2015), 145.

treats to use as vehicles for tasting the preserves, the swap occurs and everyone gets to leave with a wide variety of goods.[180]

Poverty, however, puts a strain on one's ability to be creative in preserving. When considering cooking and canning as a creative endeavour, it is vital to note that the opportunity and choice to be adventurous is often correlated to one's social class. In *More Than a Labour of Love*, Luxton reports that "of all the tasks, women unanimously listed cooking as one of their favourite jobs. They considered cooking to be the most potentially creative of all their tasks. However, they qualified their responses by noting that cooking could only be creative when the cook had sufficient time and resources."[181] The money to buy bourbon, vanilla beans, and cardamom to jazz up a jar of peaches is not available to all home canners. In their discussion of classed cooking pleasures, Cairns and Johnston argue that pleasure and privilege are intertwined: "viewing cooking as a hobby rather than necessity suggests that one is not only unburdened by the responsibilities of daily foodwork but also has ample time and resources to devote to culinary pursuits."[182] Time and resources are needed to devote to canning, however preserving food can save time in other ways.

It is a common assumption that the abundance of canned and processed foods available in grocery stores has freed women from hours of household labour. However, Marjorie Devault's seminal research on "feeding the family" demonstrates that women still spend many hours each week keeping track of needed food items, making lists, planning menus, shopping for groceries, and cooking according to the preferences of individual family members. She describes planning a meal as invisible "thought work," and asserts that

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[180] Wimbush-Bourque, *Brown Eggs and Jam Jars*, 145.
[181] Luxton, *More Than a Labour of Love*, 140.
[182] Cairns and Johnston, *Food and Femininity,* 152.

"shopping for food can be seen as a complex, artful activity that supports the production of meaningful patterns of household life by negotiating connections between household and market."[183] Making grocery lists and going shopping are time consuming activities; the women Devault interviewed were responsible for making sure cupboards were stocked with foods everyone in the family would enjoy.[184] Staying within a budget and deciding between "thousands of products" creates anxiety and takes time.[185] She also notes that "reading labels is a special skill"[186] – I find this to be the most time-consuming aspect of shopping, and one of the reasons why I do my own canning. I do not want to have to take the time to google "polysorbate 70" on my phone when I go to the grocery store. The work of canning replaces the work of shopping, reading labels, and choosing from a huge range of products.

Having a well stocked pantry saves a significant amount of time on procuring food. Anneke Geyzen studied the communication of canned foods in three Belgian women's magazines from 1945 to 1960. The agrarian magazine encouraged farming women to keep canning at home; "[it] acknowledged that home bottling did take up a lot of time and effort, but it also ensured that the jars were as time – and labor – saving as canned foods once they were filled, sealed, and stored. It even proclaimed that the time spent on preserving foods probably equaled the time spent on food shopping."[187] Working together with other family members or friends to preserve large batches of food can save time and money on meal planning and trips to the grocery store. Growing up, a trip to the "store" usually meant running down to the basement to bring my mom a can of green beans or tomatoes.

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[183] DeVault, *Feeding the Family,* 56, 59.
[184] DeVault, *Feeding the Family*, 60-64.
[185] DeVault, *Feeding the Family*, 59, 68.
[186] DeVault, *Feeding the Family*, 69.
[187] Anneke Geyzen, "The Ideology of Convenience: Canned Foods in Women's Magazines (Flanders, 1945–1960)," *Appetite* 94 (2015): 23.

Eugenia Bone addresses the time component by asserting that "I've also learned that I do indeed have the time to can, because by putting up small amounts of foods from which I can make subsequent meals, I expend less energy by preparing dinner."[188] Likewise, the authors of *Fermented Vegetables* write, "You can make delicious, nutrient-dense fermented vegetables whenever you have the time. Later, when there are no fresh veggies in the crisper drawer, or you don't have the time to cook up something quick, you'll have instant side dishes, salads, or flavorful foods around which to build a meal. Fermented vegetables are the ultimate convenience food!"[189] While it may still be awhile before fermented vegetables replace drive-thru fries, having fermented foods in the fridge is a fantastic idea as they keep for months.

Bone writes of canning, "because it takes time and care to accomplish, the craft of home canning slows down my relationship with food. Preserving is not about immediate satisfaction (for that, eat the cherries fresh). It's about anticipation. And in that sense it's an act of optimism. Yes, the world will be here in two weeks when my marinated artichokes have finished seasoning. And no, life is not slipping past unacknowledged and unrevered."[190] The anticipation aspect of canning adds to the feeling of satisfaction when a preserved product turns out just right – canned pickles, for example cannot be eaten right away. They must, as the name makes obvious, pickle first. Canadian Thanksgiving was the time when my mother would bring up the first jar of homemade pickles from the basement and I also carry on this tradition. Canning allows home cooks to be creative and create something tangible.

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[188] Eugenia Bone, *Well-Preserved* (Clarkson Potter: New York, 2009), 9.
[189] Kirsten K. Shockey and Christopher Shockey, *Fermented Vegetables* (North Adams, MA: Storey Publishing, 2014), 11.
[190] Bone, *Well-Preserved*, 9.

Conclusion

The DIY movement gave value to domestic tasks and publications like *BUST* strived to show that feminism and domesticity did not have to be incompatible. I work in an office part time and although it is fulfilling to earn my own paycheque, I am still happier planting seeds in the garden with my toddler and making dill pickles. In a world where so many individuals like myself spend their working hours staring at computer screens, it is not a surprise that canning, cooking, and other household crafts are once again enjoying a renaissance. It is easy to get lost in the routine of motherhood and work, and gardening and canning has given me a creative outlet. When I look at my garden and my Mason jars I feel proud of what I have accomplished.

Master Preserver Christina Ward argues that gardeners and canners like herself worked tirelessly to preserve these traditions and give them value. She recounts her experience of growing up in an era of third wave feminism while helping her Gramma with the gardening and preserving, which she refers to as her Gramma's "craftwork." Ward writes,

> As a teenager discovering punk rock and feminism, my eyes opened to the value of so-called 'women's work.' The making of things. Food preservation became more than a jar of pickles; it became a direct link to our matriarchal history. Looking back now to the early 1990s and the rise of Third Wave feminism, music…is often cited as that moment in the cultural zeitgeist that birthed a new consciousness. Maybe so, but the DIY maker movement of the early 2000s has its roots in that same early 1990s period where women, like myself, worked to keep the old ways alive."[191]

[191] Christina Ward, *Preservation: The Art and Science of Canning, Fermentation and Dehydration* (Port Townsend, WA: Process Media, 2017), 14.

Women – and men – have always canned. Its popularity has gone in waves but there has always been preserving enthusiasts working “to keep the old ways alive,” and in the twenty-first century canning and other domestic tasks are being reconsidered as valuable activities.

CHAPTER THREE

Urban Homesteading, Blogging, and The Constraints of Choice

> *"But now, everything old is new again. The resurgent interest in local foods and home-scale preservation – from canning, jamming, freezing, brewing, fermenting, and otherwise experimenting with food – is happening coast to coast. Taking up the pot and the pan, the cheesecloth and strainer, the canning jar and the wine bottle, homesteaders are beginning to reweave the web of culture lost in the toxic downdrift of the industrial food supply. Food preservation is hooked into all the values of homesteading – self-sufficiency, community resilience, DIY for fun and pleasure – a reminder that food is not something that's done for us, but something that we do with one another."*[192]

Canning is an integral component of the urban homesteading movement; for homesteaders who grow their own food, canning and preserving is a natural extension of becoming self-sufficient throughout the whole year. As Kaplan and Blume describe in the quote above, home canners who also urban homestead are taking control of their food supply by gardening and preserving the surplus. This chapter will discuss if choosing to can and urban homestead is a feminist act, or if it is a return to traditional gender roles. Exactly what defines an action or decision as feminist is a highly debateable topic – in this chapter I will discuss canning and urban homesteading through the lens of choice feminism to attempt to answer if these activities can be considered feminist. I will also use autoethnography as method and choice feminism as theory to delve into my own conflicts between the academic and the domestic.

Educated women with successful careers who dabble in the domestic or quit their jobs to become fulltime homemakers/urban homesteaders are not always taken seriously in news publications and academic literature. The problem is that individual choices, such as

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[192] Kaplan and Blume, *Urban Homesteading: Heirloom Skills for Sustainable Living,* 141.

"dropping out" of the work force to urban homestead, can structurally move women back into a traditional gender role of being the primary caregiver and food provider for their families. However, the bloggers to be discussed in this chapter do not view their work or roles as traditional or a burden – they see urban homesteading as a solution to problems surrounding the food supply, industrialism, and consumerism. They want to take care of their family's well-being. Furthermore, food blogs are blurring the divide between the private and public spheres and thus complicating the definition of paid work and being engaged in the outer world. Antonia Smith argues that "the urban homestead movement…is a community of practice that is almost completely defined by its online relationships. While participants are doing real-world work – in their gardens and homes – and while there certainly must be participants in the movement who are not active participants in the blogosphere, I would argue that it is the blogosphere that nevertheless defines the scope of the movement."[193] Female urban homesteaders are forger careers not only through the unpaid work they do at home, but also through the paid work of writing stories and tutorials about their lifestyle in blogs and homesteading manuals.

September 8, 2017: *My tomatoes are finally all starting to ripen! It feels amazing to harvest a crop of something I have grown, even if it is only a small bowlful at a time. Unfortunately, I will not have enough Roma tomatoes to make into sauce or salsa, I thought I had planted four Romas but it turns out there are only two plants. I of course ignored the number one piece of advice from every urban homesteading book I have read about keeping a gardening journal. I have Brussel sprouts and green cabbage starts in the shed and I have no idea*

[193] Smith, "The Farm Wife Mystery School," 145.

which is which because I didn't think about labelling them. Babies take a chunk of their parents' brains when they are born. I can only remember to do so much.

The days of taking little G into the garden with me and sifting dirt are long gone. One, I got sick of digging dirt, and two, he's a toddler who doesn't understand that the only acorn squash on the plant was not ready to be picked.

Such is life.

My pepper plants that I thought were dead before I even transplanted them are doing great! There are several peppers on them. The beans look phenomenal and I am starting to harvest them. Beans are such amazing plants; I love coming out to the garden every morning and seeing how they have managed to further wrap themselves around my make-shift trellis of scavenged sticks.

Planting and looking after a garden have been wonderful lessons in patience and hope. Due to several factors almost everything was planted late, and we haven't been able to eat that many veggies out of the garden yet. Most things will be ready this month and I get emotional thinking that I did much of the work myself with my baby beside me. There were times when I wondered what I was doing all this work for when I could just buy all my produce, but in the end it felt good to get dirt underneath my finger nails and watch my garden grow. Everything is too instant, too convenient in our society; we don't have to work with our hands anymore to procure what we need. I think that's part of the reason why canning is becoming popular again – it's so satisfying to be able to say "Yes, I made it myself."[194]

My renewed interest in gardening and home canning often feels in conflict with the academic and admittedly, competitive side of me and I often wonder, must I choose one over

[194] Woman's Home Companion, *The Woman's Home Companion Cook Book*, 861.

the other? I am the oldest of four children and I began helping with the cooking and canning at a young age. My Mennonite grandmother canned fruit and vegetables, made applesauce, baked bread, and cooked from scratch. These skills were passed on to my mother and then on to me. My most vivid memories of canning are measuring sugar into jars for peaches and running cucumbers through a meat grinder to make relish. We lived in a tiny town on five acres with a huge garden, fruit trees, and space to run around. While this sounds like an idyllic existence, my number one goal was to venture out on my own and attend university. I had absolutely no desire to be a stay at home mom and be domestic. I fulfilled my dream of attending university and it was there that I experienced the "profound personal transformation"[195] of becoming a feminist.

Despite reading "The Problem that has no Name,"[196] cooking and baking were my favourite ways to procrastinate in university. I found that kneading bread was relaxing and therapeutic; it connected me to my soul and the earth in a way I find hard to explain. I also could not live without my mom's dill pickles and I started making my own with the help of my spouse. I wanted to plant a garden but never lived in a place where that was an option. In July of 2016 my partner was offered a job transfer to a town on the Sunshine Coast.[197] We were extremely fortunate to find a little house on two acres with a small garden plot. I spent the first rainy winter dreaming of spending sunny summer afternoons in the garden with my

[195] Sandra Bartky famously wrote that "to be a feminist, one has first to become one. For many feminists, this involves the experience of a profound personal transformation, an experience which goes far beyond that sphere of human activity we regard ordinarily as 'political.'" "Toward a Phenomenology of Feminist Consciousness," *Social Theory and Practice* 3, no. 4 (Fall 1975): 425.
[196] The first chapter of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*.
[197] The Sunshine Coast is a strip of land north of Vancouver; it is on the mainland but can only be accessed by boat and BC Ferries. It extends from Gibson's in the south to Powell River in the north, although this town has not always been included in the Sunshine Coast.

son. I underestimated how much work it would be to start a garden, especially with a one-year old baby by my side, but I was proud of what I accomplished and it felt significant. Studying food preservation and urban homesteading inspired me to grow some of my own produce and start canning and baking bread again. At the same time, I restarted working on my thesis in January, 2017 after a yearlong Leave of Absence. It felt good to use my academic brain again.

Michelle Catherine Nelson, author of the *Urban Homesteading Cookbook*, also grapples with my Conflict. She explains, "There were two conflicted sides of me: one in a black pencil dress and stiletto heels walking the red carpet on Queen Street, the other daydreaming about keeping fluffy heritage chickens, growing food, stocking preserves…about not being dependent on a grocery store."[198] Nelson spent her childhood summers visiting her grandmother's farm on the Sunshine Coast; she has memories of collecting eggs, helping make pies and preserves, and biting into homemade bread. Her grandmother's farm as well as her advanced degrees in agriculture and conservation inspired her to grow as much food as she could in her Vancouver apartment as well as forage for greens in the city. Nelson was able to bring the skills and values she learned on her Grandmother's farm and in her university studies to her life in Vancouver.[199] Despite drawing on traditional foraging and preserving skills, her cookbook does not feel like a step back in time, but a step into a future of not relying solely on a grocery store for food.

Choice Feminism, Domesticity, and "Blogging About It"

Whatever a woman decides to do – make jam, urban homestead, or pursue a career - is viewed as her choice in the name of choice feminism, but choices are anything but simple,

[198] Nelson, *The Urban Homesteading Cookbook,* 10-11.
[199] Nelson, *The Urban Homesteading Cookbook,* 11-12.

and the same choices are not available to all women. Choice feminism glosses over the fact that class and race and myriad other factors create inequalities for women which affect the number of opportunities available to them. Cairns and Johnston write that "because we are all assumed to be equal players at the gender table, women are framed as individuals who freely "choose" to "empower" themselves with activities previously linked to femininity's subordinate status – including shopping and cooking."[200] The fact that women always have and still do the majority of the cooking in Western society is glossed over when it is assumed that gender equality has been achieved.

The choice of urban homesteading (on a very small scale) and staying at home with my baby is only available to me because I have a partner with a job that pays the bills and comes with full medical and dental benefits. In a blog post titled "Where the Men Aren't," Strauss acknowledges that the world of self-sufficiency blogs is primarily female-centric and there are often male partners behind the scenes making this lifestyle possible by earning a paycheque. She writes,

> If your guy is like Homebrew Husband, maybe he only goes to work so he can come home again, to the family he loves and supports. Maybe he sits through mind-numbing meetings and dreams of tractors…But instead, every damn day, maybe he wakes up early, commutes, sucks it up and earns money because, until we can pay the mortgage in potatoes, people he loves count on him do to so. The men are there. I know they are. Quiet, not flashy, behind the scenes. Supporting in their own way. Important figures in the equation that adds up to a productive home. If modern homesteading is in-part about community building, the first community to build is the one under your own roof. So even if the guys don't show up too often in this blogger world of primarily female voices, let's remember them, shall we?[201]

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[200] Cairns and Johnston, *Food and Femininity*, 13.
[201] Erica Strauss, "Where the Men Aren't," *Northwest Edible Life* (blog), June 16, 2012, https://nwedible.com/where-the-men-arent/.

Strauss' article superbly addresses the fact that being an urban homesteader is unlikely to pay all the bills, and someone needs to go out and work. Due to my research, I can corroborate Strauss' assessment that women dominate the world of urban homesteading and food blogging. But there are men, and of course other women, in the background making their choices and efforts possible. In response to Strauss' article on the political act of making dinner, one commentator noted that "I can't ask my husband to work in a killer corporate world because I want to garden. The goal is a world where there are more options for all, but living off the labor of a person I love is not an option for me, because that's not what he wants either."[202] I feel the same way – my partner wants to change careers and I cannot ask him to continue on with his current job so I can urban homestead, especially when he has helped support me through my years of university. I also do not want to stay at home full time – I want to put all my years of academic study to use in a job outside the home.

Michaele L. Ferguson articulates that according to choice feminism, women's freedom comes down to the ability and opportunity to make their own individual choices; it separates the public from the private and the personal from the political. It is a feminism that wants to include everyone and judge no one.[203] Under the mantel of choice feminism, if a woman chooses to quit her job to grow heirloom tomatoes, raise chickens, and bake bread, she should feel empowered to do so without judgement. Parker and Morrow critically ask, "If women are so bound up with the intricacies of home life via home-grown probiotics, food preservation, and blogging, how can they participate in other important social and economic urban transformations?"[204] Similarly, Ferguson argues that feminists must be willing to

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[202] K. Coghlan, in response to Strauss, "The Political Act of Making Dinner."
[203] See Michaele L. Ferguson, "Choice Feminism and the Fear of Politics," *Perspectives on Politics* 8, no. 1 (March 2010): 247-253.
[204] Parker and Morrow, "Urban Homesteading and Intensive Mothering," 10.

engage in the world of politics and make judgements – this does not mean being judgemental – about the personal. She stands behind feminists who maintain that for women to be truly free we need political freedom; she asserts, "Women are free only to the extent that they are engaged in the political practice of creating, reimaging, and transforming the shared world in which they live."[205]

As far as engaging in politics is concerned, it is evident that many food preservers and urban homesteaders view their actions as a political act and a form of resistance against the industrial food complex. In writing about the back to the land movement, Jeffrey Jacob notes that the "movement was, in its own quiet way, a broad-based protest against what the spirit of the sixties saw as the irrational materialism of urban life."[206] Twenty-first century urban homesteaders - despite living in towns or cities - also share this sentiment; their decisions to live a less consumeristic and more sustainable lifestyle is an important political act. As Master Preserver Theresa Loe observes, "Canning and preserving is an important part of the self-reliant and urban homesteading movement that is growing right now. People want to be more responsible for their own survival as well as for the survival of the earth. All food preservation is a part of that. In addition, by preserving our own food, we know exactly what is IN that food."[207] If it is true that 'actions speak louder than words,' then choosing to live by example as a tomato canning and/or urban homesteading feminist is a way of making a judgement about the pitfalls of a consumeristic society and a food system that is full of preservatives and additives.

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[205] Ferguson, "Choice Feminism and the Fear of Politics," 251.
[206] Jeffrey Jacob, *New Pioneers,* 3. Jacobs notes that "rather than unconsciously submit to the social forces that move most of their fellow citizens in the same direction, back-to-the-landers turn counterclockwise against the grain of prevailing fashion," 18.
[207] Loe, "What is all this talk about Canning?."

It is also important to recognize that deciding to "stay at home" is not a simple decision, and not necessarily a privileged one either. Stable and decent paying work can be difficult to find; also, daycare can be incredibly expensive and it is hard to find a daycare that has space available. In the fall of 2018 my son was on a waitlist for daycare for two months; I was only able to work because my partner could write his schedule around mine. The "choice" of staying home is often made because of economic reasons and governments that will not put universal daycare in place. As Claire Snyder-Hall states, "the rhetoric of "choice" focuses attention on the individual choice-maker and so takes the focus off the ways in which women's choices are often overdetermined by societal structures and cultural traditions."[208] The individual is blamed for her choices outside of the societal and familial context that created those choices.

Blogging has made it possible for some women to combine having a career and staying at home. Beyond being a potential source of income, I would also argue that blogs are the twenty-first century version of attending a consciousness-raising group. Peggy Orenstein writes in her article "The Femivore's Dilemma," that "a generation and many lawsuits later,[209] some women found meaning and power through paid employment. Others merely found a new source of alienation. What to do? The wages of housewifery had not changed — an increased risk of depression, a niggling purposelessness, economic dependence on your husband — only now, bearing them was considered a "choice": if you felt stuck, it was your own fault."[210] Based on the number of homesteading and homemaking blogs I have read, I believe it is safe to assume that many twenty-first century homesteaders

[208] Snyder-Hall, "Third-Wave Feminism and the Defense of "Choice,""256.
[209] She is referring to the middle-class housewives of the 1950s and the publication of *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan. Orenstein, "The Femivore's Dilemma."
[210] Orenstein, "The Femivore's Dilemma."

and homemakers want to feel validated in their endeavours. Cooking, gardening, cleaning, and taking care of children can be lonely jobs, and blogging about homemaking probably makes one feel a little less isolated.

Although Parker and Morrow do not see much potential in blogging for inciting social change, many women who can and urban homesteader are engaged with social and political issues, especially the adverse effects of the industrial food system. They share their memories, thoughts, and ideas about canning on the internet to inspire others – women and men – to create with their hands and preserve local produce. Kurtz et al. argue that "online environments are used to produce meaningful and complex interactions of all different kinds including providing places for people to connect with others for support and to share thoughts, ideas, and stories."[211] Communities form on the internet, and the incredible number of blogs and books that exist about urban homesteading and food preservation is proof that many of the authors want to reach a larger audience and do not wish to live in isolation.

Aimée Wimbush-Bourque is a Canadian food blogger who has turned her love of cooking for her family, raising chickens, and gardening into a career. She is a trained professional chef who now urban homesteads and runs the popular Canadian food blog *Simple Bites*. Wimbush-Bourque grew up on a homestead in northern British Columbia so the work of homesteading and canning/preserving is not new to her.[212] She recently moved to Nova Scotia from Montreal with her husband and three children. She writes, "after falling in

[211] Kurtz, et al., "Blogs as Elusive Ethnographic Texts," 2.

[212] Wimbush-Bourque notes, "Cooking has always been my preferred recreational activity, creative outlet, and source of relaxation. My biggest inspiration is my mother, who was about 30 years ahead of the recent "real food" movement. She and my father homeschooled us four kids and raised most of our own food, which gave me ample 'Little House on the Prairie' opportunities as a little girl. Milking goats, collecting eggs, hauling wood, and baking bread were just a few of my daily activities." "Meet Aimée," *Simple Bites* (blog), accessed June 25, 2020, https://simplebites.net/about/meet-aimee/.

love with motherhood and wanting to stay at home with my babies, and after nearly ten years in the professional cooking industry, I traded my tongs and chef whites for cloth diapers and a laptop, and married my two passions by becoming a food/mommy blogger."[213] She has two published cookbooks and has written an extensive section on canning on her website.

Due to the popularity of her blog and cookbooks, it is likely that Wimbush-Bourque makes a comfortable income from her endeavours. Thus, the question arises, if a woman can make money from canning and blogging about it, does that count as a career, and as being involved in the outer world? I would argue absolutely - successful bloggers have a far wider influence than they likely would at work. Some canners and urban homesteaders are breaking the divide between the home and the workplace by making money from their homesteading and/or canning blogs. The blogosphere is redefining what it means to work from home and combine having a career with raising a family.

Another example is the urban homesteading blog *Northwest Edible Life*, run by Erica Strauss.[214] She describes herself as "a professional chef turned gardening and urban homesteading fanatic."[215] Strauss married her passions for writing, cooking, and gardening to create her blog; she explains, "I wasn't actually trying to be a writer. I was a secret hippie in the suburbs. You know the type: looks perfectly normal in the preschool pick-up line, but is always in the garden or canning something or letting their kids run around without pants."[216] She felt others might benefit from her knowledge of growing vegetables in the Pacific Northwest climate, and her blog became a huge success. She has also written a book, *The Hands-On Home*, with tips and recipes for 'from-scratch' living. She is not afraid to address

[213] Wimbush-Bourque, "Meet Aimée."
[214] Erica Strauss, "About," *Northwest Edible Life*, accessed January 4, 2018, https://nwedible.com/about/.
[215] Strauss, "About."
[216] Strauss, "About."

potentially controversial topics or bring up the "f" word – feminism. For Strauss, feminism is about having options, for both men and women: she writes, "Feminism must be dedicated to expanding options, including the option to not compete in a traditional corporate sense, for both women and men, or it loses its relevance."[217] Strauss does not buy into the conventional definition of success which involves climbing the career ladder and establishing wealth through money and possessions.

On her blog Strauss addresses the question of why she undertakes all the chores that urban homesteading entails; a friend had recently told her that she was "really crazy"[218] for staying up until two in the morning to finish canning tomatoes. First, she acknowledges that many people live this lifestyle for political reasons and to shake their fist at giant corporations. But Strauss notes that these motivations are often underlined with fear and anger, and at the end of a very long day of canning tomatoes other reasons must supersede these negative emotions. She pens, "all that political spitfire, as much as I enjoy it occasionally, isn't really why I do any of this. I don't bake my own bread to fuck over Wonder Bread (owned by Hostess) or can my own tomatoes to stick it to Muir Glen (owned by General Mills)." Why then, does she can? Strauss answers:

> Because I have a pantry that reflects a summer spent in relaxing work and joyful creation.
> Because cooking dinner makes me proud.
> Because the food is delicious.
> Because this kind of work makes me happy.
> That's why. And that's enough.[219]

[217] Strauss, "The Political Act of Making Dinner."
[218] Erica Strauss, "Zombies Vs. The Joy of Canning: Motivation in the Productive Home," *North West Edible Life* (blog), August 21, 2012, https://nwedible.com/zombies-canning-motivation-in-the-productive-home/.
[219] Strauss, "Zombies Vs. The Joy of Canning."

Strauss finds happiness and pride in everything she does at home; it is clear from her blog posts that urban homesteading is the life for her.

There is a caveat, however; *Simple Bites* and other domestic/food blogs espouse an ideal where mothers take on the responsibility of happily cooking delicious and nutritious meals for their families. In her study of food blogs and post feminist domesticity, Salvio compares the domestic centered food blogs written by and for women to cookbooks from the 1950s that firmly placed women in the kitchen. She argues that in many blogs "post feminist sensibilities persist. They exacerbate distinctions between men and women and provoke middle-class anxieties about having children, finding a husband, and securing the comforts of home."[220] While she is critical of the traditional gender roles being evoked by many female food bloggers, she does note that "while limited feminist sensibility is apparent in many of these blogs, one could argue that the bloggers demonstrate a potential for resistance by combining their work in the home with their work in the public world of published writing."[221] She refers to the writing of domesticity in a public space as "fracturing the split behind the public and private spheres."[222]

In a blog post titled "Women's Work," Shannon Hayes argues that "entrepreneurship is a woman's chance to truly have it all. We don't face glass ceilings, and as business owners, we build lives that center around the things that matter to us: families, children, good food, joyful living. But there's more happening. Entrepreneurship is our chance to re-write the economy so that it makes sense: so that marriages work, so that kids have viable

[220] Salvio, "Dishing It Out," 35.
[221] Salvio, "Dishing It Out," 38.
[222] Salvio, "Dishing It Out," 38.

futures, so that the soil gets richer and the water gets cleaner."[223] For her, this is women's work. In the county where she lives, several of the successful small businesses are run by women. Blogs that make money are a type of small business, a form of entrepreneurship that women have turned to in order to be their own boss and balance work and home life.

One example is the blog *Living Home Grown*, run by Theresa Loe. In her personal blog biography, she explains how she learned to can and preserve at her "mother's apron strings," but as she grew up she "shifted focus and followed in [her] father and brother's footsteps toward technology."[224] She received a degree in engineering and she writes that "I knew I had made a mistake."[225] She went back to school to study sustainable horticulture, culinary arts, and food preserving. Her official biography states that "Theresa has a diverse and successful background as a digital entrepreneur, the Co-Executive TV producer of the top organic-gardening series on PBS, and as an on-camera expert in small-space food growing, homesteading and preserving. She has developed her brand, *Living Homegrown Media*, into a dynamic 6-figure business that includes online courses, business coaching and a membership site for organic, sustainable living."[226] Leaving a male dominated profession to urban homestead, preserve food, and create a blog did not mean Loe "dropped out" of having a career.

Blogger and cookbook author Ashley English left her office job to become a homesteader. She explains, "two years ago, I was hopping in my car each morning, heading

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[223] Shannon Hayes, "Women's Work," *The Radical Homemaker* (blog), June 1, 2018, http://theradicalhomemaker.net/tuesday-post/womens-work/.
[224] Theresa Loe, "About Me, Theresa Loe," *Living Home Grown* (blog), accessed May 31, 2017 https://livinghomegrown.com/about/.
[225] Loe, "About Me, Theresa Loe."
[226] "Theresa Loe's Official Bio," *Living Home Grown* (blog), accessed May 31, 2017 https://livinghomegrown.com/theresa-loe-bio/.

off to a job in a medical office. Things changed, though, when a whirlwind romance quickly resulted in marriage, a little homestead at the end of a dirt road, and just the encouragement and support I needed to make some serious life changes. Combining my long-standing interest and education in nutrition, sustainability, and local food, I made the bold decision to leave my stable office job and try my hand at homesteading."[227] English started a blog to record her adventures and became the author of several cookbooks and homesteading how-to manuals. *Canning and Preserving with Ashley English* highlights other home canners throughout the cookbook in a subsection titled "Portrait of a Canner." The home preservers describe how they started canning, what it means to them, and why other people should also can. One canner, Amy, was inspired to start making jam after going to France on vacation; she now runs her own successful jam making company.[228] Home canning and urban homesteading is certainly not a money making career path for everyone, but the women highlighted in this chapter demonstrate that there is value in growing your own food and preserving it.

Conclusion

August 1st, 2018*: My garden looks amazing – so much better than last year. My tomato plants are beautiful and are starting to produce little tomatoes. I have a "wall" of drying beans growing above sweet dumpling delicata squash, buttercup squash, and yellow zucchini in a bed of soil that I made. I'm so proud of that. I built a lasagna garden bed with layers of carrot tops, cabbage leaves, autumn leaves, grass clippings, and peat moss. It was awesome to see it decompose.*

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[227] English, *Canning and Preserving with Ashley English*, 8.
[228] English, *Canning and Preserving with Ashley English*, 87. Amy's jam company is called *Lemon Bird Preserves*, https://lemonbirddesign.com/.

I also have purple bush beans, a type of black drying bean, peas, beets, Wisconsin pickling cucumbers, Super Red cabbage, January King cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, red bull's horn peppers, Hungarian cheese blend peppers, dill, chamomile, rosemary, oregano, and sage. I've had to water everyday the past few weeks since it's been so hot, and there's usually something to take care of everyday, but it's lots of fun and it's amazing to be able to eat veggies I grew myself.

I've made bread and butter pickles and dill pickle relish this year so far – the relish turned out great. My second batch was better. I also made strawberry rhubarb jam with balsamic vinegar and vanilla bean yesterday. It's incredible. Blackberry season is finally starting which is exciting! They are still G's favourite and he always asks for "blackbees."

This year I have been rethinking exactly what I want to do with my life, and about work inside and outside the home. The danger with urban homesteading is that it could become the new "angel in the home" ideology where the "perfect" wife and mother gardens, makes soaps, preserves, cooks everything from scratch, uses cloth diapers, and homeschools. Yesterday I came home to G's cloth diapers drying on the front porch and thought, 'multiple women's movements were fought so I didn't have to do this.' And when I was pregnant, I never really thought about whether I should or shouldn't use them – it just seemed like the thing to do.

But I also think of the intro to the BUST DIY Guide to Life and how the creators of the magazine believed homemaking skills and feminism don't have to be incompatible. To devalue domestic tasks is to devalue women's work in the home. For me the answer is to pick and choose what I am capable of doing with the energy and time I have available. I did not do as much canning as I would have liked this summer but that is how life goes sometimes.

It is the nature of the work both inside and outside the home that makes it fulfilling for the person undertaking it. Shannon Hayes points out that "What Friedan understood, but what many of us ultimately forgot, is that simply landing a job does *not* guarantee self-actualization. At the same time, the homemaker who simply learns to cook dinner, keep a garden and patch blue jeans will probably not find deep fulfillment, either. Those who do not seriously challenge themselves with a genuine life plan, with the intent of taking a constructive role in society, will share the same dangers as the housewives who suffered under the mystique of feminine fulfillment." [229] My "life plan" has entailed volunteering at my town's museum in order to put my history degree to use and become more involved with my community. I have interests and hobbies outside of work and motherhood, which I think is incredibly important for my well-being.

Defining success only by what a person accomplishes in the public sphere devalues women's work, and second it devalues jobs that are not viewed as "masculine" or "career" type jobs. It depends upon the person doing the valuing, but overall, I feel that my canning of produce is valued. People want my preserves. I recently decided to conduct an experiment by posting on my Facebook page that I am thinking of canning extra pickles, fancy jams, and barbeque sauce to sell to family and friends. I hardly use Facebook and I do not have that many "friends," therefore, I doubt many people saw my post, but ten friends responded with resounding enthusiasm. I did not mention anything about prices, and no one asked.

[229] Hayes, *Radical Homemakers*, 45.

CONCLUSION

Home preserving is an activity that maintains links with a person's familial past. Learning how to preserve and teaching the skills to the next generation honours the preserving work of female ancestors; many canners feel they are honouring the women who have come before them by learning how to preserve. Lugonja writes,

> The first time Grandma taught me how to preserve fruit she was 72 and I was living in Lethbridge with my first baby, getting domestic. She came to visit and so I bought a case of pears and peaches and apricots and we canned. It was a lot of work…the 36 quarts of fruit looked like jewels in the morning sun. That was a profound experience, and one I cherish and have worked to preserve as I have continued this tradition my entire life."[230]

Women's preserving skills are being remembered as exactly that – a skill – and it is being appreciated and preserved by a new generation of home canners.

Even though I believe these skills should be valued, I do not expect everyone to share my love of canning and other domestic skills. In an article titled, "I am a Radical Homemaker Failure," in which she discusses Hayes' book, Madeline Holler shares different sentiments about canning and bread baking. She muses, "I had considered -- sometimes seriously -- canning produce as a way to keep costs down. Canning is a common theme in Hayes' book. Just thinking about putting up a winter's worth of green beans and apricot jam, though, made me want to take a nap. Even baking all of my own bread sounded dreadful. For me, kneading dough was the physical manifestation of pushing and pressing all of life's ambitions into one yeasty ball of carbs."[231] When she wrote this article, Holler and her husband were living on one third of their previous income; Holler had left her career to take

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[230] Lugonja, "The Canadian Food Experience Project: Round Up Five."
[231] Madeline Holler, "I am a Radical Homemaker Failure," *Salon,* June 30, 2010, https://www.salon.com/2010/06/30/radical_homemaker_failure/.

care of their baby, and her husband had decided to switch careers. She notes how "Living on the cheap is exhausting, mentally and emotionally. I don't mind going without. But for what you do need? That takes planning. It takes so much time."[232]

My research indicates that canning is one of the most popular modern homemaking activities because it does not require a large financial investment. Mason jars and canners can be found at thrift stores and garage sales. However, accessing in season fruit and vegetables that are affordable is not always easy. For people experiencing urban poverty, lack of transportation may be a barrier to finding this produce. The romantic notion of driving to a u-pick farm to collect strawberries is not possible for someone who does not have a vehicle. I did not can during the times in my life when I could hardly afford groceries, or when I lived in a large city with no car.

Furthermore, canning is not always leisurely. I also want to take a nap at the thought of canning a winter's worth of green beans. I do not always enjoy canning, or cooking, or gardening. Sometimes I am simply too busy or too tired. I still have a container of raspberries macerated with sugar in the freezer waiting to be made into jam because I grew tired of canning last summer. I like preparing the fruit and the vegetables for canning, but I will admit that processing the jars is a bit of a chore. Canning in community can address issues of not always having the time to can; 'do it yourself' does not have to mean 'do it all by yourself.' Last year a friend came over to make jam, and it was reassuring to know that there was someone to help me in case my baby woke up in the middle of processing jars. I am also fortunate to live in a place with several small farms – my husband and I are subscribed to a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) share that we receive every other week. When this

[232] Holler, "I am a Radical Homemaker Failure."

farm share first started a few years ago we had to drive out to the farm to pick up our boxes, but for the 2020 season, pick up is available in the neighbourhood where we live. In the fall of 2018, a small produce market also opened near our house. My neighborhood has a varied mix of incomes, many on the lower side, and these options make local produce affordable and accessible for people who may not have a car or are struggling to make ends meet.

A blog post by Strauss makes evident that viewing canning through a 'necessity in the past' vs. 'pleasure in the present' dichotomy is an oversimplification of canning throughout history and the present. She writes in "The Crush of the Harvest," "perhaps you are questioning this whole, damned endeavor. Maybe you're starting to remember how your grandma never actually sat down from July through October. Is the gingham-marketed joy of the grow-your-own, preserve-your-own, cook-your-own life starting to look a bit more like a self-made hell, than the modern road to freedom?"[233] In this post she is referring to the time of year when all the produce is ready at once and the home canner is racing against time to get it into jars. For urban homesteaders who grow their own gardens and are committed to preserving it, canning is still a necessity. Strauss further notes, "When the sheer thrill of that DIY jam lets go, you're left with a simple truth: what you started with passion has become obligation."[234] My garden is looking fantastic this year, and once my tomato plants start producing, I know I will be canning for both enjoyment and necessity.

The term "having it all" can mean different things to different women, and the definition can change over the course of one's life. Right now my definition of "having it all" is being able to work part time outside the home so that I can be with my kids more at home

[233] Erica Strauss, "The Crush of the Harvest," August 20, 2015, *Northwest Edible Life*, https://nwedible.com/crush-of-the-harvest/.
[234] Strauss, "The Crush of the Harvest."

before they go to school. I have always wanted a career, and that has not changed, but what has also become important to me at this stage in my life is that I work for someone who is supportive of working moms and flexible with what shifts I can work. “Having it all” also means that I have time to pursue my creative and homemaking interests. I want to keep on writing, and I have plans to start my own blog and turn some of the sections of this thesis into blog posts. I do not have to choose one side of myself over another, I will always love to cook, write, preserve, research, and garden.

I want my sons to know that the skills of gardening, canning, and cooking are vital, and that women AND men are perfectly capable of learning them. My oldest son has been digging in the garden with me since before he could walk, and these are some of my favourite memories of spending time with him. Without meaning to I have become a radical homemaking feminist, striving to give value to all work, whether it is paid or unpaid, in the home, or outside of it. I am thankful that writing about something as seemingly mundane as home canning allowed me to explore domestic work in depth, and I hope that I have inspired you to think about your food memories, your ancestors, where your food comes from, and what foodwork means to you.

CANNING IN THE TIME OF COVID: AN AFTERWARD

It seems fitting that I am completing this thesis during the COVID-19 pandemic – throughout this year I have observed another explosion of interest in gardening, bread baking, and other domestic tasks. At first my social media feeds were filled with posts of sourdough bread; by midsummer those posts switched to gleaming photos of Mason jars filled with strawberry rhubarb jam, tomatoes, and pickles. I am writing this at the end of August, and canning equipment has now overtaken flour and yeast as one of the most in demand commodities of 2020. According to an article in *Better Homes and Gardens* magazine, would be canners are having a difficult time tracking down canning lids. Mason jars can be used for years if there are no cracks or chips in them, but lids can only be used once otherwise they may not seal properly. Marie Bregg, owner of the online shop *Mason Jar Merchant*, told *Better Homes and Gardens* that "'Earlier in the year, many people looked for ways to pass the time in their own backyards, and now we have a bunch of baby tomatoes running around just begging to be turned into salsas and pasta sauces, or strawberries into jams and preserves. It's the summertime version of spring's sourdough-baking craze. I call it Sourdough 2.0.'"[235] Bregg's store experienced a massive increase in sales during August from customers searching for canning lids due to a lack of supply in stores.

I went shopping for extra jars and lids a couple of months ago because I was worried about a shortage; as I was perusing the shelves a sales associate told me that the canning section of the store was twice as large as last year. Food security/sovereignty and food prices are major concerns this year. Knowing how to grow our own food in our communities and

[235] Karla Walsh, "If You're Struggling to Find Canning Supplies Right Now, You're Not Alone," *Better Homes and Gardens*, August 31, 2020, https://www.bhg.com/recipes/how-to/preserving-canning/canning-supplies-shortage-coronavirus/.

preserve it is an answer to these concerns. I am not saying that every person must garden and preserve, or that every woman – or man – should become an urban farmsteader. However, we should try and support people who do these things by buying their produce, cheese, and jams.

While COVID-19 certainly brought its stresses, I enjoyed the opportunity to plant a brand-new garden in raised beds this spring, bake with my oldest son – not sourdough, I will admit – and flip through cookbooks I have been neglecting. I believe life should involve appreciating the every day things, and creating a home life that gives you a sense of peace. That is what the past few years of my life have been about, and I think that is what women – and men – who choose to farmstead on a larger scale are striving to accomplish.[236] They are redefining what work and success looks like. In this new era of a global pandemic, interest in the domestic arts is here to stay. I predict that academic articles are going to be written on the sourdough bread craze, and I cannot wait to read them.

[236] See for example Ashley English's "About" page on her website *Small Measures*, https://www.smallmeasure.com/our-roots.

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