

TAKE ONE!**THEY ARE FREE!****TAKE ONE!****THEY ARE FREE!****TAKE ONE!**

...from the bush

Happy New Year**Number 18 January 2008**

Charlie Grinds

Linda's bread recipes often use the phrase "Whole Wheat Flour". This doesn't exactly describe what she means. A better phrase would be "Charlie's Whole Wheat Flour". This would be a lot more accurate, though not so precise. My flour contains whole wheat, it's true, but it has a whole lot more. I put flax seed in the mix to monitor the grind. I include ten percent field corn as I believe it cleans the grinder and there are other, more variable inputs.

The grains I grind contain chaff, oats and wild seeds of all kinds as they're either straight out of the combine, or might as well be. The cold, cold winters round here've dealt with the meal worms who shared our corn in Hamilton, but we really don't miss the extra protein all that much. On top of all this, I add my current grain fad, which has ranged from barley, through whole oats to the present one, buckwheat, of which more later.

When my Aunt Ruth died, I came into a chunk of the family money. Although I know how to live middle-class and Linda knows how to live poor, neither of us knew how to live "rich". As a consequence, we spent the money as fast as we could. We kept at least two cabs busy full time and never ate at home until it was all gone. During this financial surge, I bought a German hand grinder. This took a white elephant off the hands of the local health food store and started me on my journey towards beating Linda at arm wrestling.

When I came home with this prize, we jumped into a cab and went off and bought a sack of pigeon corn and a sack of hard wheat. Miller Charlie was on his way! After we moved up here, I began trying to grow the Three Sisters of the Iroquois Nation, corn, beans and squash. I'd seen corn and squash grown together in Yugoslavia years ago, and wanted to go on from there. Nothing worked out and my sack of pigeon corn shrank and shrank till I had a quart of kernels left.

Last year I bought some seeds from Salt Spring Island Seeds (PO Box 444, Ganges, Salt Spring Island, BC V8K 2W1), who keep a Sanctuary of heritage seed, and I learned that virtually all our seeds in North America are now Genetically Modified. I realized that I may have the only jar of non-GM corn left in North America. I'd bought the corn before the big seed companies swamped our farmers with their patented varieties.

Even though field corn only stays viable for two years and mine was eight years old, I sowed the whole quart in my shaded and rock-strewn potato field, gambling on probability. Chance came through all right, but being what it is, the two corn plants that did come up were within two inches of each other. Ah well.

Although I checked the plants every day, they held back until mid summer. Then I told them that the future of the Free World rested on their corny shoulders and Low and Behold, they began to flower. In the end, I harvested 22 grains of real corn, guaranteed by Father Time to be absolutely safe to eat. We've saved them for the Spring and I'll let you know how it goes.

But back to the grinder. My latest experiments've been with buckwheat. I've been eating whole buckwheat with my breakfast cereal and really enjoyed it. A local farmer sold us a sack of buckwheat straight from the combine. The chickens loved it and it looks like it'll add some nutrition to their feed. My grinder aces it, if somewhat slowly, and easily crushes the kernels to flour as it flakes off the husk. A quick shaking over some window screen gave me 95% separation of the chaff and nice clean flour.

My partner, always ready for yet another cooking experiment, cooked up some buckwheat pancakes and Whammo! I was addicted again! Rats!! Buckwheat Pancakes Anonymous, anyone?

All the best from the bush, Charlie.



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voice from the bush

ALFALFA, LUCERNE, *MEDICAGO SATIVA*

by Charlie Johnson

This herb, Alfalfa, was the herb that started it all for me, I mean after my childhood experiences of getting to drink the water that the broccoli was boiled in because it was good for me. Over twenty five years ago, a little old lady I was visiting said that she drank a tea made of alfalfa for her arthritis. "If I miss a day or two," she said, "The pain comes back." In those days, she used to buy it as a bag of loose rabbit food from the pet food store, but today I take it as compressed leaf tablets that I get from Smallman's or the Pantry.

Over-enthusiastic me immediately rushed out and bought two books on herbs that I never even cracked for the next five years. I guess I had other things on my mind.

Alfalfa was well known before I came along, of course. The Arabs were singing its praises for their horses at the time of the Crusades or before, as all you racehorse owners will know. It's full of vitamins and minerals, as well as chlorophyll and all sorts of other goodies, quite wonderful in fact. Linda tells me it's one of the best ways to move those accumulated heavy metals out of the system. This should be good news around here, as there's so much arsenic in the water released from the silver mining. When we arrived in Haileybury, I noticed that the stainless steel cutlery slowly turned blue in the dishes water, from all the heavy metals I supposed. That was why I decided to collect our water from the roof when we built in the bush. At least it had been distilled as rain, no matter what else it had in it.

As I insist on telling you, I have to take psychiatric pills to keep my head reasonably straight. Like all pills they have side effects like, in my case, muscle cramps. I've used a variety of herbal teas to keep me functioning, ranging from

the awful, shuddering variety to the merely 'Not too bad' ones in my efforts to prevent the muscle cramps. I've been fighting a rear-guard action against Linda's suggestion of alfalfa for a long time, but I've recently given in with great relief. I suspect I no longer need the intermittent agonies and their dreadful cures just to feel OK.

With the onset of near sanity in my life, I've tried the tablets on a regular basis with good results. The need for more drastic cures to my pains have dropped to a tenth of what it was. I began with two tablets, which did no harm, and slowly worked up to the six I take every night. Linda takes them too, for her hexavalent chromium excesses resulting from using chrome tanned moose hide for so many years. (that was the stuff in the Erin Brockavich movie that had contaminated a whole town and which still seems to be used all over the place these days)

I'm watching my sebaceous cysts with interest, too. My psychiatrist insists that these are hereditary and have nothing to do with my pills, although I only started to get them by the dozen after I was on my present medication. I didn't push the point as the pills actually work and the little lumps usually don't bother me, certainly not as much as having a lumpy mind would. Anyway, I've only been taking alfalfa for three months, compared to the ten years on the other meds, so it's early days for the long term stuff and I'll let you know how it goes, As for my short term results, however, it's wonderful.

Then there's always the tried and true testing from the animal kingdom....Can a hundred thousand rabbits be wrong?

All the best from the bush, Charlie

GRAMMA'S CHIPPER

Wishing you all a Wonderful 2008!

444 LAKEVIEW DRIVE JUST AROUND THE CORNER FROM N.C.F.M.

...from the community

Area Snowmobilers Find what they Need at the Corner in North Cobalt!

In my efforts to provide a balanced community page I have entered the world of the winter machines. My most recent experience with snowmobiles was of our neighbour George hauling wood up to the house our first year out here. With Liliane and Charlie (one stick at a time as he healed from surgery) filling the sled at the bottom of the hill and me dumping it at the top, George completed several people hours of travois work in about half an hour. So I appreciate the workhorse aspect of the ski-doo along with the help of our friends.

My last experience with recreational snowmobiling was many, many years ago, when I lived in Callander, where I was voted "girl most likely to be left in the bush" by my fellow snowmobilers (due mostly to my irritating habit of falling off the machine in a drunken, but happy, state).

This year the snowmobiling season came early and many local snowmobilers and tourist establishments hope it will also stay late. I saw the latest machines at BNS Corner Gas last week and was amazed at the appearance of them. They look fast. They bore little resemblance to the clunky, wide tracked, gassy skidoos of my mis-spent youth so I thought I'd ask Bill about them...

Bill is the owner of BNS Corner Gas in North Cobalt.

So Bill, how long have you been here? We opened in August of 2006.

What sorts of services do you provide? Gas, of course and Snowmobile & ATV parts, maintenance and repairs. We also sell Fishing Licenses, Tackle & Bait and have an ATM machine and the 5 liter jugs of water. Last summer we added Scoop Ice Cream and have Movie Rentals along with snacks, beverages and munchies. We built a Coffee Bar last fall and plan to open a Lunch Counter with Soup, Chili, and the like.

I see a lot of snowmobiles being repaired out back! What's your experience with engines?

I have worked in automotive repairs and maintenance for fourteen years. I also have a further four years experience with marine engines.

With your years of experience what would you say is the most important maintenance requirement for safe sledding? Preventive Maintenance! It's better to fix it before it breaks down in the bush.

What is the most important thing that needs to be done to maintain a snowmobile?

It is extremely important to put stabilizer in the fuel and to fog the engine in the spring.

The new machines seem nothing like the ones I fell off in the 70's. How would you rate the newer snowmobiles? With better engineering, fuel injection, the newest in electronics and excellent mileage it is no problem to take today's machines on long runs, like 200 miles. You wouldn't have attempted that with the old models. These days the snowmobiles are better made, more efficient and safer than ever provided they are well maintained!

Thanks Bill! I'd like to mention that while I was chatting with Bill a customer came in to discuss his recent purchase and the repairs it would need. I was impressed by Bill's explanations. Even I understood what he was talking about! Now if I could just remember where I put my ski-doo suit....

Happy New Year and Safe Sledding! *from Charlie & Linda*

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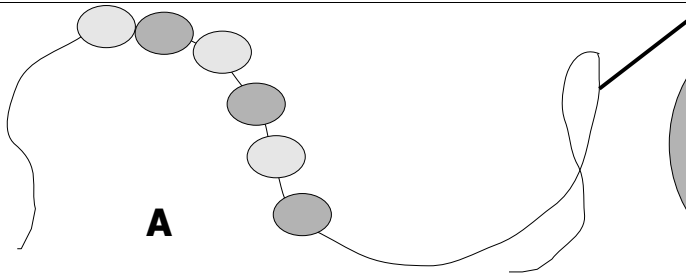
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CRAFTS...from the bush

The Spiral

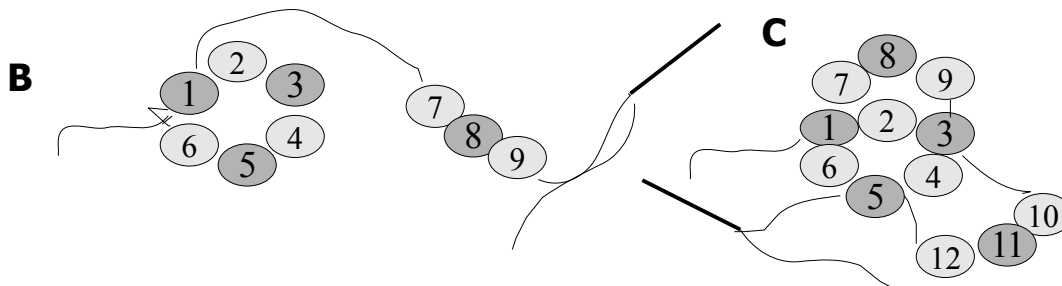
by little bear



You will need thread, needle, two colours of beads, clasp & some patience!



1. Thread a needle of a size appropriate for the size of bead you will be using. I recommend a size six bead for a beginner, with two colours of beads. A length of two feet of thread should be manageable for beading but lengths will need to be added for finishing items.
2. Thread six beads of alternating colours (dark then light) (**Diagram A above**) and tie a knot to hold them together. Then go through bead **#1** again, as shown in **Diagram B** so the thread is set up for the next three beads, **#7, 8, 9**, to be picked up as shown (light-then dark-then light).



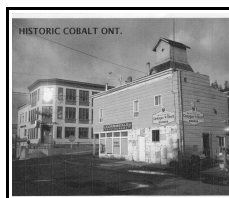
3. Insert the needle into the next dark bead (**#3**) (**Diagram C**) then add three more beads (light-then dark-then light) **#10, 11, 12**, and insert needle into bead **#5**. Add three more beads (**13,14,15**) then **ignore** bead **#1** and put needle into bead **#8**. Add 3 more beads (light-dark-light) then go into bead **#11**. Continue around and you will spiral upwards as you add three beads and insert the needle into the next center(dark) bead of the three. **Keep tension tight** or bracelet will collapse where threads are loose.
4. **To add thread** just reverse sewing back into the piece for a few sections and cut. Rethread and start sewing back a few sections spiraling up until you return to where you left off. Continue to the desired length.
5. When you reach the desired length **add a clasp** or bead suitable for a clasp. Attach the clasp bead and, after weaving it back through the work, cut the thread. Go back to the other end and weave thread into the work, add beaded loop or metal clasp to match the other end. Weave thread through the work and cut. Enjoy the Spiral.

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...from the cave

Spiral of Life

by little bear

It has been a quiet and restful Christmas for me. It's the first time in years that I've had no orders for Little Bear Crafts and it has been a real temptation for me to leap up and run off to town. The habits of a lifetime are not easily overcome.

I continue to remind myself that it is OK to look around and appreciate being here without feeling guilty about reading a book or making something for fun. The addition of a 12 V light hanging by my chair has replaced the miner's lamp and is much better for my eyes so I've been beading.

The making of Spiral Bracelets as explained on the Craft page has kept me happy for hours. The double helix of DNA, the cycle of life, the seasons, the rotation of heavenly bodies through the universe and so many more realities of Earthly Experience are represented by the Spiral.

It seems that things, conversations and my response to events all wind through my thoughts until they become "non-events". Seeing the similarities in things that occur, becoming aware of the patterns, helps me to challenge the old and make room for the new. Over time, with practise, the changes occur and my introspection is rewarded by a happier, calmer me.

My time spent beading these Spiral Bracelets this last few weeks has kept me sitting and feeling all the accumulated stuff that makes me think "I am what I produce".

That is not true. I am a Human Being (not a Human Doing) and in time the Spiral of my thoughts will take me to the truth, one bead at a time!

Happy New Year from the cave! little bear

TORNADO

Written on the passing of Hugh Campbell-Brown

I will sow the wind of changes
in the furrows of mankind
to root the seeds of freedom
in the blocks of people's minds.

And I will ask five questions
on the fingers of mankind
and tell the six right answers
on the hands of womankind.

And I will say to mothers:
"Die, so that your child can live,"
and to old and crippled children
call "Reveille! Pay your way!"

Beware the crash of castles
and those old slow creaking empires
that seek to trap the mousey meek within.
For the mice will turn to men
who will never stand alone
with their women, no longer girls,
beside their side.

They will set their mighty muscles
to the strong but crumbling wall
and all together give a gentle push
and, all together,
will walk free
into the dawning day.

Charlie Johnson

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Herbs & Recipes...from the bush

BUCKWHEAT PANCAKES

by Linda

Buckwheat is the latest find in our quest to buy local and provide the nutrients needed for a healthy human. (or chicken)

While most books call buckwheat a grain, it is a relative of rhubarb and a member of the dock family.

It not only contains 11% protein but also has most of the B vitamins we need. It's biggest claim to fame, however, is its rutenic acid content. This substance is a real cleanser for veins and arteries and is often prescribed by homeopathic doctors for people with circulatory problems, varicose veins, or heart conditions.

I can see, after some experimenting with buckwheat in several recipes, why it is not very popular for baking or cooking. It is gray. No matter what I did to dress them up, the muffins, bread and pancakes looked bad to my 21st century eyes. Gray food is unattractive to me and probably to others as well.

Some cultures in Europe and Asia have roasted the Buckwheat to make Kasha. The next time I feel adventurous I will attempt a casserole recipe with kasha.

I found the best recipe for my "novice buckwheat cooking" period is the one for pancakes. They are filling and can be cooked a bit longer in order to darken them up and lose some of the gray.

The pancakes are better, I've found, when mixed with a bit of corn and whole wheat flours. Buckwheat flour is fine and powdery so needs to be stirred up to keep it from settling to the bottom of the bowl. The baking powder should be sifted with the other dry ingredients to mix it properly with the buckwheat.

A thin batter will produce a lighter pancake and all the buckwheat recipes, that I've seen so far, call for thinner mixtures.

There, now you know as much about buckwheat as I do. Except perhaps that it is well worth the effort to add it to the diet; especially if health concerns include those mentioned here.

My lizard Samantha (I'll tell you more about her another time) taught me many things. The main one was that "You are what your Prey eats!". Her lack of appropriate diet (being so far away from the Mojave Desert) caused her to experience vitamin and mineral deficiencies. We couldn't help her enough and she became terminally ill. She still helps me remember that a healthy diet, good water, exercise and less self imposed stress will see me into 2008 fit for what ever challenges and opportunities the Spiral of Life sends my way.

BUCKWHEAT PANCAKES


1½ Cups	Buckwheat Flour
½ Cup	Whole Wheat Flour
2 tsp.	Baking Powder
2 tsp.	Sugar
1/8 tsp.	Salt

Sift Ingredients together (or mix well)

2 Eggs	Beaten
1½ Cups	Milk
½ Cup	Water

Mix then blend with dry ingredients

Cook on Stovetop by ladling onto a hot, lightly oiled, griddle. Flip when bubbles show in center of pancake. Serve with Maple Syrup!



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OPINIONS from the Bush

Bali

by A. Buschmann

I lost confidence in our system of government when I was a teenager. I watched helplessly as various British Cabinets ignored the recommendations of twelve, count them TWELVE, Royal Commissions in a row and did exactly as they pleased anyway. Later, I saw that hundreds of thousands of people marching for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament had no effect on the nuclear weapons policy of England or the world.

This supreme disconnect between a ruler and their citizens is not new in human history, of course. The king always did what he wanted, or what he could get away with under the shadow of a larger neighbour king and if the opposition didn't like it then "Off with his head!"

It's sometimes difficult for me to realize that the Queen (or the U.S. President or the Prime Minister) still has to put a left foot into a left shoe same as I do, and that they still have to clean their own teeth or they'll drop out. They have to breath air and drink water to stay alive. They're still just folks, like you or me.

So when the presidents, kings, queens, prime ministers and their representatives met recently at the Climate Change Conference in Bali they agreed to write an agreement on what to do about Climate Change.

This latest agreement to hammer out the details of a new agreement to replace the old Kyoto Agreement (which no one actually stuck to ...) was agreed upon after much debate. Canada's role in this lack of progress was worse than "not good", but that's not what I want to talk about.

I want to suggest a "just us folks" solution.

Although no meaningful guidelines to reduce greenhouse gasses were reached in Bali, all of us who like living on this planet can

do something on our own. Yes, folks, it's up to us. One car at a time it got this way and one car at a time we can get out of it. The Big People won't do what's right for us and our grandchildren, so us Little People must. Become Green Vigilantes!!

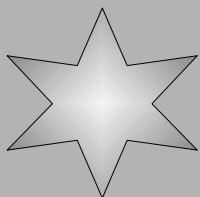
One of the beautiful aspects of Northern Ontario life that I enjoy is the strength of family here and the importance of the children within that family. I've never in my life seen so many annual family gatherings as there are here. If we in the North want to keep a habitable planet to have family gatherings on we're going to have to do it ourselves. Steve and the gang aren't going to help us. This disconnect between people and their government is now a life threatening issue. Action is required.

Just because my glasses are within the "legal limit" for driving, I know they're not safe, so I make my own law and get them changed so I can safely drive. The law doesn't tell me to get my truck safety-checked once a year, but I think it's important to know how safe it is, so I get it checked. SO if Steven Harper won't legislate me to burn less fuel to conserve then there's nothing to stop me doing just that anyway, now is there?

Just because my composting, recycling and growing food for our home use is not legislated by Kyoto or Bali or the Canadian Government doesn't mean I shouldn't do it. It all adds up towards air I can breath, water I can drink and a sun that won't fry me up.

Be more than the Law, all you family-oriented Green Vigilantes. Every little light switch counts towards keeping those reunions happening!!

At least that's my opinion, A. Buschmann.



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S P I R I T U A L I T Y

PAIN

Linda first noticed me when I had the task of speaker at a twelve-step group. I began my talk the way I always did by asking The Man Upstairs to direct what came out of my mouth. I surprised myself when I said "I come from a perfectly normal family: perfectly normal physical abuse, perfectly normal emotional abuse and perfectly normal sexual abuse." and I went on from there to touch on the rest of it.

Linda was so tired of all the "Whine and Geez" type of speakers she'd heard that she was immediately attracted to this strange string bean of a man with his hair all over the place, standing at the front of the room. The rest, as they say, is history.

We were talking the other night about the difference between pain and suffering and, as the little list above shows, I've had my share of pain. My sponsors would tell me that pain is inevitable but suffering is optional and I would look at them as though they were crazy. Linda explained that everyone has pain, but it's what we do with it that either turns it into suffering or not. Our choice. I guess I didn't believe in suffering, which is why my sponsors' pithy sayings made no sense to me. I didn't like hurting, so I always did what I could to make it go away.

Take the death of my kid sister, for example. She died when she was around four and a half and I was five or so. She was my best friend and only playmate and then she was gone. I didn't let this ruin my life, I just went solitary. I taught myself how to play alone and how to read and I read book after book every night. I replaced my playmate with the world of stories.

I may well have been blessed with the subconscious knowledge that "This too shall pass", because the town I lived in, York, was steeped in history. I dug up a Roman coin when I was weeding the garden one day, and another time I picked up a musket ball on someone's driveway that likely came from the English Civil War. All those bloody acts of old were very close and made me aware that I was a lucky man to live when

and where I did. I've done the best I could in this time and place and did it a lot better once I adopted a 'Shrug and a Boo Hoo' approach instead of the 'Waah, Waah' that I used to have. After reaching this level of personal responsibility, I chewed over in my restless mind the "God is love" vs "Human suffering" conundrum.

The basic question as I see it is this. If God is so loving, then why did He cause X to happen to me? My answer is as follows. Since I believe my soul lives for ever, and I have many lives on this plane of existence, I've got many chances for spiritual growth if I choose to take them. I further believe that there are many planes of spiritual existence but only on this three dimensional one can I do anything about the pains I've accumulated in other lifetimes. Karmic checks and balances, if you like.

Now I don't know the rules and I doubt that anyone does so all these musings are straight guesswork on my part.

After years of therapy, when I had a much clearer idea of what happened to me as a child, I realized that the best explanation of why it happened the way it did was because I chose to be born into that specific situation. I mean, look at it. Born in the middle of a war, bombed in the womb, my Quaker father throwing over his religion to go to war, my allergy to baby formula and on and on. Why? Because I chose it.

I can well imagine me skipping around Heaven and saying "Not now, I'm having too much fun" to God, or His Quaker equivalent, namely 'The Committee of Reconnecting Bodies And Souls'. "I'll wait until it's worth my while to go back to Earth."

I remember asking God during one of my tougher spells "Why is this so hard for me?" and I got the answer immediately..."You wouldn't have it any other way."

Of course, I laughed at that and went to sleep, confident that my private name for God was the right one. I call Him 'Chuckles'. The joke continues, Charlie.



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