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The Feast Nearby: How I lost my job, buried a marriage, and found my way by keeping chickens, foraging, preserving, bartering, and eating locally (all on $40 a week)

Robin Mather

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Within a single week in 2009, food journalist Robin Mather found herself on the threshold of a divorce and laid off from her job at the *Chicago Tribune*. Forced into a radical life change, she returned to her native rural Michigan.

There she learned to live on a limited budget while remaining true to her culinary principles of eating well and as locally as possible. In The Feast Nearby, Mather chronicles her year-long project: preparing and consuming three home-cooked, totally seasonal, and local meals a day--all on forty dollars a week.

With insight and humor, Mather explores the confusion and needful compromises in eating locally. She examines why local often trumps organic, and wonders why the USDA recommends white bread, powdered milk, and instant orange drinks as part of its “low-cost” food budget program.

Through local eating, Mather forges connections with the farmers, vendors, and growers who provide her with sustenance. She becomes more closely attuned to the nuances of each season, inhabiting her little corner of the world more fully, and building a life richer than she imagined it could be.

The Feast Nearby celebrates small pleasures: home-roasted coffee, a pantry stocked with home-canned green beans and homemade preserves, and the contented clucking of laying hens in the backyard. Mather also draws on her rich culinary knowledge to present nearly one hundred seasonal recipes that are inspiring, enticing, and economical--cooking goals that don’t always overlap--such as Pickled Asparagus with Lemon, Tarragon, and Garlic; Cider-Braised Pork Loin with Apples and Onions; and Cardamom-Coffee Toffee Bars.

Mather’s poignant, reflective narrative shares encouraging advice for aspiring locavores everywhere, and combines the virtues of kitchen thrift with the pleasures of cooking--and eating--well.

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