

DOWN ON  
*MaryJane's*Farm

*Her mail-order food and handicraft business grossed over a million dollars last year, and her cookbooks are raking in even more.*

*MaryJane Butters, 54, is determined to bring out the farm girl in all of us. Here, she shares her back-to-the-earth philosophy—and recipes for a simple summer feast*

By Sally Belk King Photographed by Ray Kachatorian







FOOD STYLING: STEPHANA BOTTOM, PROP STYLING: LUCY ATTWATER

Butters on her bicycle with a basketful of panbread (recipe, page 176)



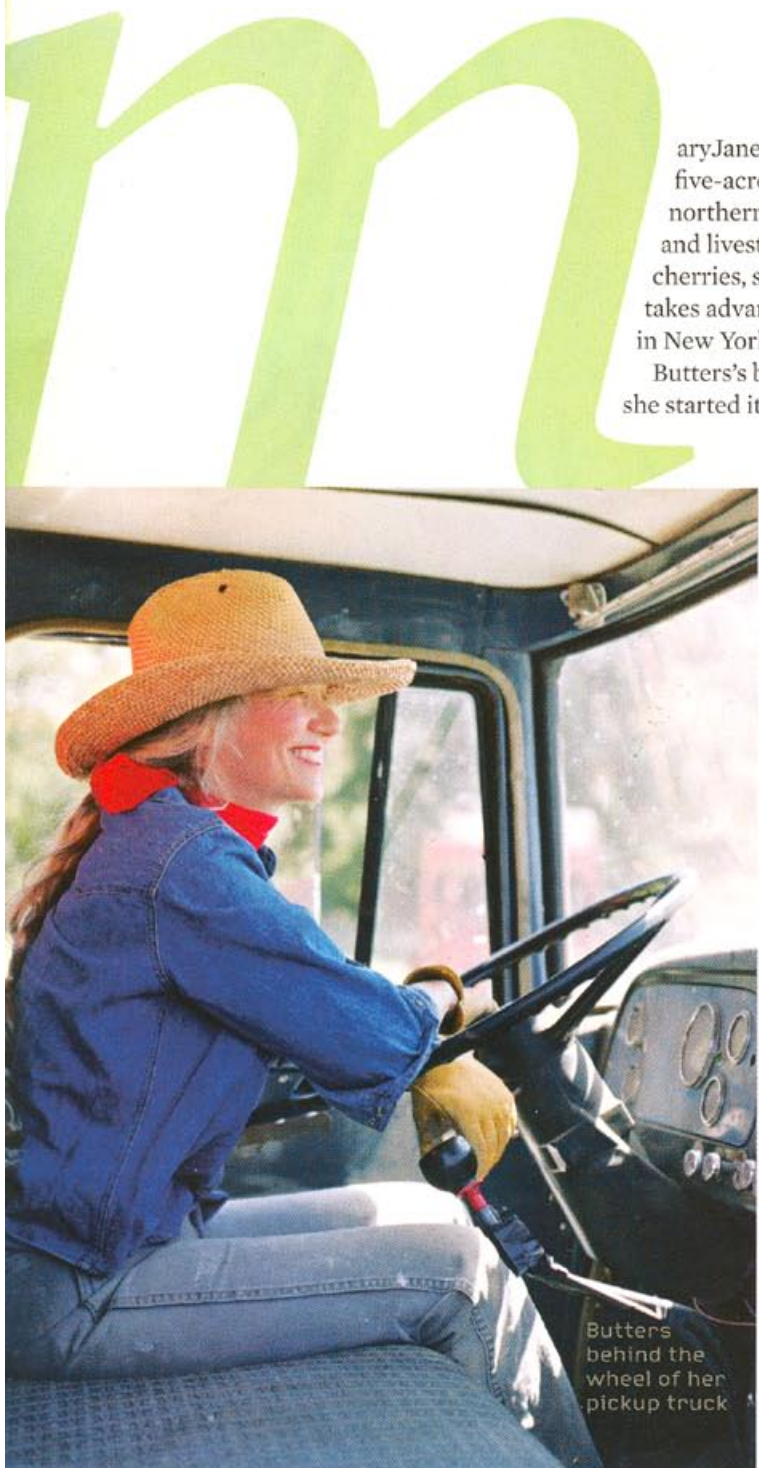
*“If you grow a pansy on your fire escape,  
you’re a farm girl. If you have a fantasy about producing  
something with your hands, you’re a farm girl.”*

aryJane Butters lives a double life at the end of a dirt road on a lush five-acre farm in Moscow, Idaho, a small, bustling town in the northern part of the state. She rises before dawn to tend her chickens and livestock and to work in the gardens, where she grows zucchini, cherries, strawberries, potatoes, peas, pears, onions and garlic. She also takes advantage of the early hour to catch her agent arriving at her desk in New York City.

Butters’s business, MaryJanesFarm, has been growing like crazy. Since she started it in 1986, Butters has expanded from quick-prep organic food mixes (she sells more than 60 kinds) to bed linens, towels, quilts, rag dolls, clogs, seedlings and aprons. She also has a Web site; a roughly twice-a-year magazine-cum-catalog called *MaryJanesFarm*; and a book, *MaryJane’s Ideabook, Cookbook, Lifebook*, the first of three guides for which Random House paid a \$1.35 million advance in 2003. Then there’s the B&B she runs in the summer (where \$139 to \$169 a night gets you a tent on her property and a breakfast of shirred eggs cooked over a campfire). For those who can’t make the pilgrimage in person, Butters sponsors Farmgirl Chapters, where women come together to knit, exchange recipes and hang out. (There are now almost 400 in six countries.)

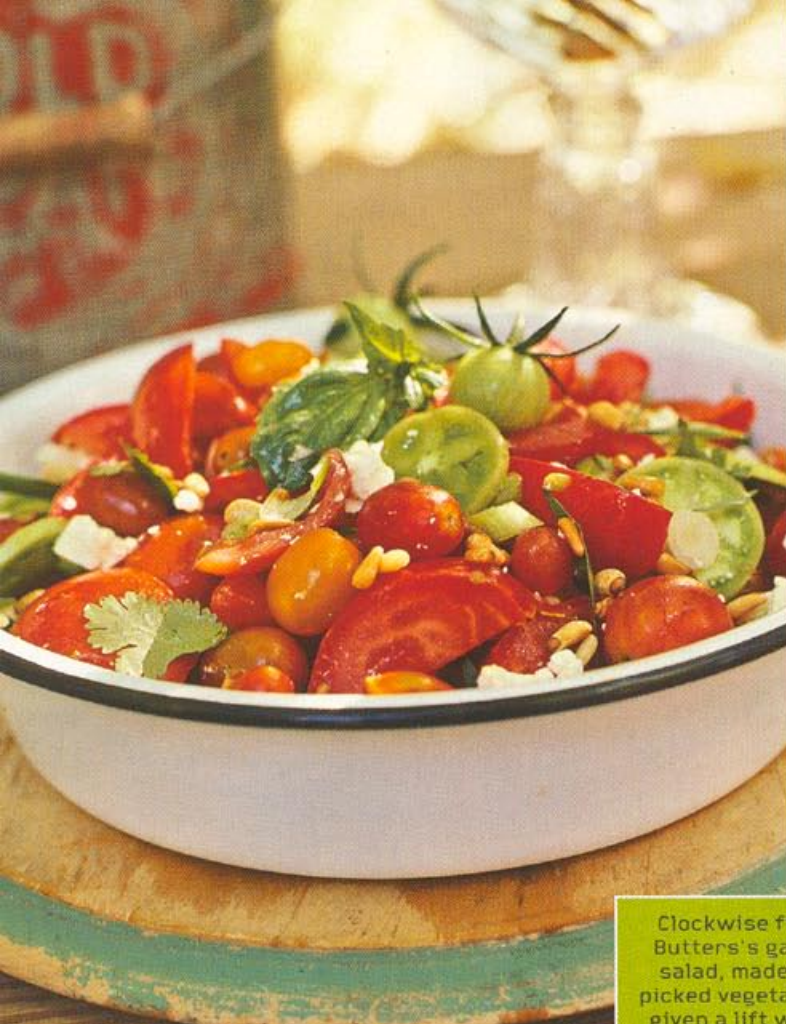
Butters may call herself a farm girl, but she’s a marketer first, and her talent shows in everything she does: In 2006 her annual sales topped \$1 million, a figure made all the more impressive considering that five years ago, she and her third husband, Nick Ogle, had a combined income of \$18,000. But marketing is nothing if not driven by vision, and this too Butters has demonstrated. When it comes down to it, she’s selling a way of life. “If you knit scarves, you’re a farm girl,” Butters elaborates. “If you grow a pansy on your fire escape, you’re a farm girl. If you have a fantasy about producing something with your hands, you’re a farm girl.”

What sets Butters apart from other lifestyle gurus is how effectively she’s tapped into a fantasy: She knows that her customers don’t want the country life every day; they just like to be able to dip into it, buying a piece of the dream without putting in the hard work of the real thing. “You have a billion e-mails to answer and you’re driving down the freeway, and you think about the little house with the picket fence,” she says. “You’re longing for something

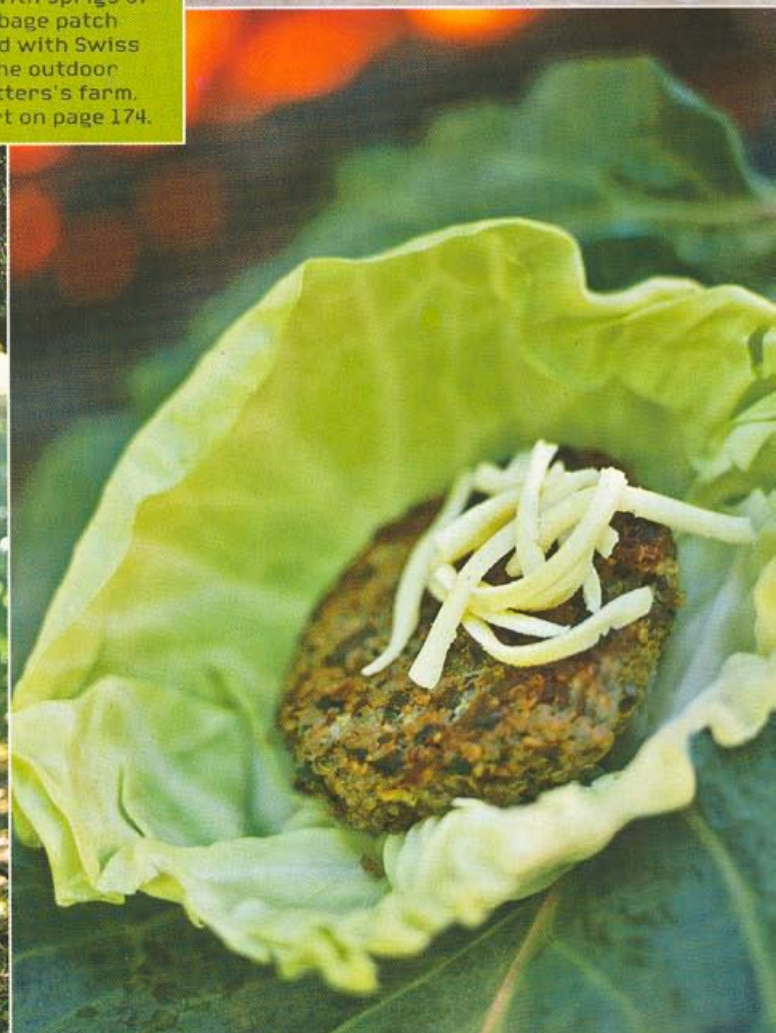
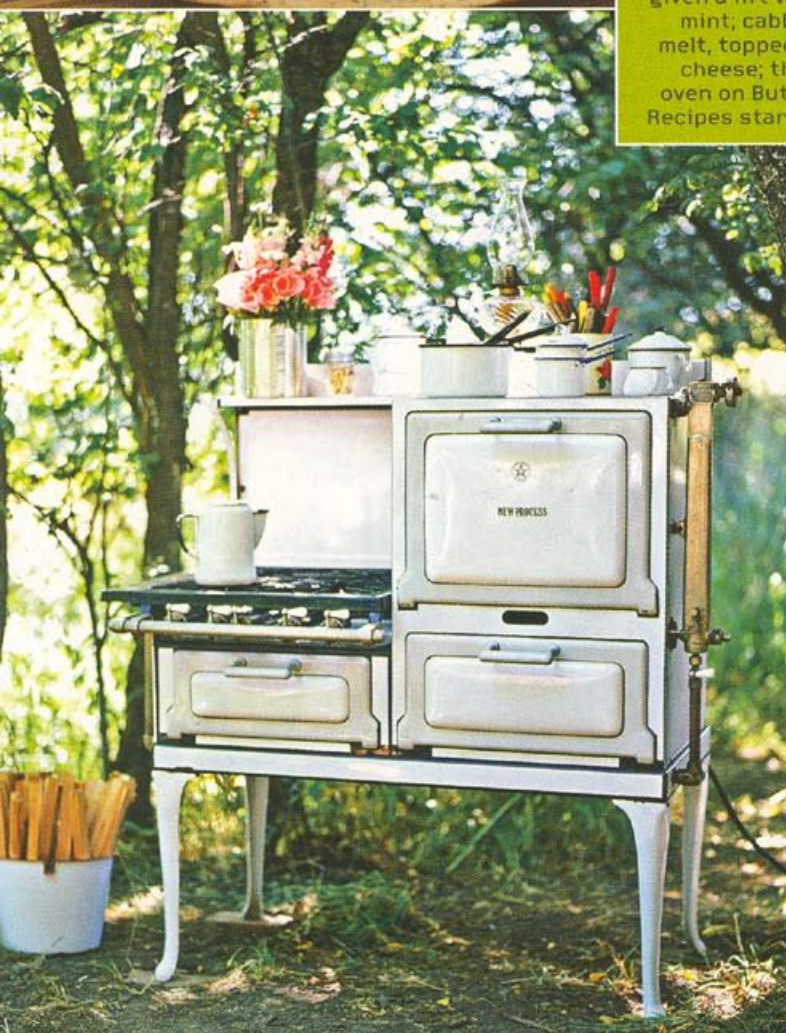


Butters  
behind the  
wheel of her  
pickup truck





Clockwise from top left: Butters's garden tomato salad, made with fresh-picked vegetables; iced tea, given a lift with sprigs of mint; cabbage patch melt, topped with Swiss cheese; the outdoor oven on Butters's farm. Recipes start on page 174.







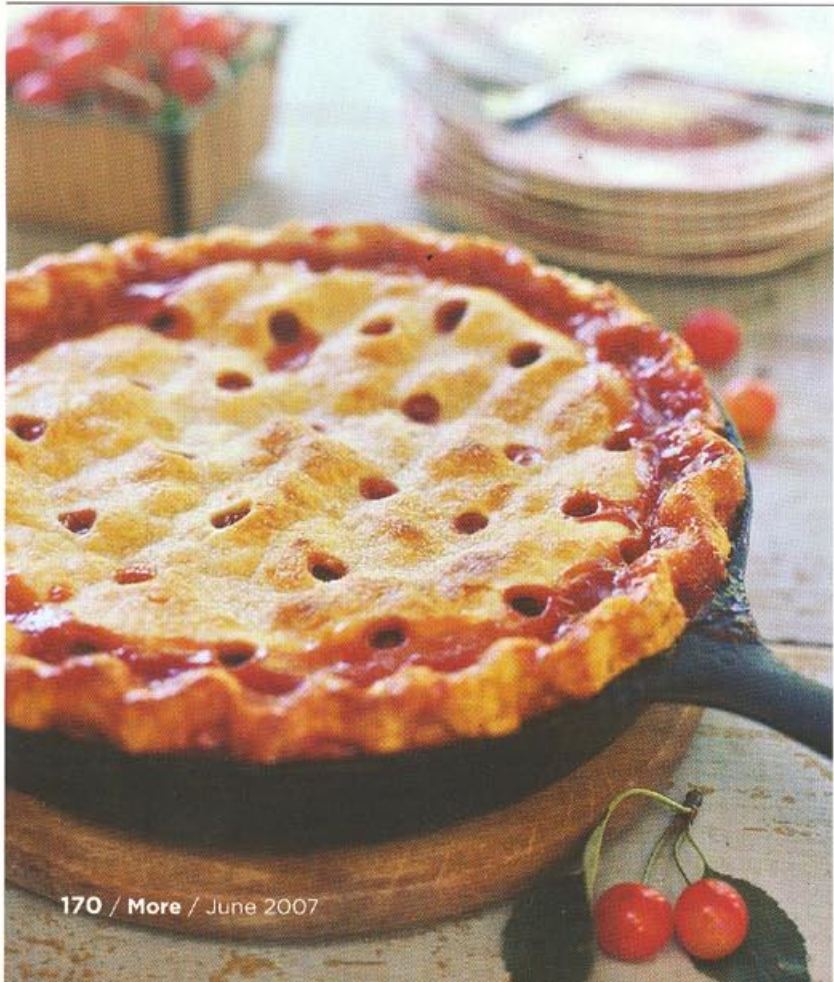
From top: Butters and friends sit down to lunch at the picnic table on her farm; homemade cherry pie (recipe, page 178).

simple. It's a mood across the nation." All of Butters's products—such as the quilt-making kit she has in development, which will come with precut squares—make it easy for her customers to maintain the illusion of wholesome, salt-of-the-earth goodness without giving up too many creature comforts. And Butters herself personifies the country life while making it seem accessible: "I can build a house, but I also like earrings as big as a coaster," she says. "I have a foot in both worlds, and that's what I think is needed."

MaryJanesFarm started when, in one of those twists of fate that becomes memorable only in hindsight, a neighbor had a surplus garbanzo crop. Butters took the chickpeas home and got busy experimenting—frying, steaming, seasoning, dehydrating. After countless versions of "Mom's awful falafel," Butters's first instant packaged food, called Paradise Farm Falafel, was born. Figuring she would have a better shot in the marketplace

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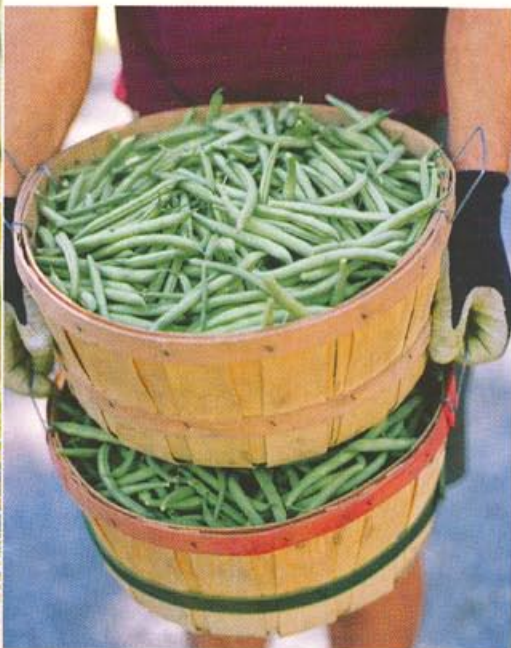
*I build my meals around what the farm has to offer."*



with "some value added," as she puts it, Butters, a longtime environmental activist, decided to make all her mixes organic. The falafel mix was joined subsequently by an organic tabbouleh mix and such top-sellers as Budget Mix, an organic take on Bisquick and BakeOver, a one-skillet meal. "Women don't want to go back to cooking from scratch," Butters says. "And I sell instant organic food that isn't junk."

Butters used to prepare a sit-down dinner every night, but these days, with her kids out of the house (her daughter, Megan, is 27; her son, Emil, is 23), she skips the ritual. Now lunch is her favorite meal, perhaps because there are plenty of people around to help put it together. Butters or one of her 24 employees will pick and choose from the contents of the greenhouse (which holds a variety of lettuces); the root cellar full of beets, squash, potatoes and homemade sauerkraut; or the barn, the henhouse or the fields. "When you live on a farm, you eat what the farm gives you," she says. "I don't go to the store and shop for a particular recipe. My kale and arugula are so good, it's like eating candy." →





*“When I was a teenager, I conjured a fantasy of a farm at the end of a dirt road. I would be this rough-and-ready woman.”*

For an easy meal, Butters—who prides herself on her refusal to bother with something as pesky as a recipe—will toss a squash and a mound of potatoes into the oven. “The kind of squash I grow tastes like pumpkin-pie filling, and I love the combination of the squash and potatoes,” she says. “I’ll have some right when they come out with butter and maybe some sauerkraut on top.” Dessert might be fresh strawberries and blueberries from her garden. After a meal, she loves French roast coffee, “the kind a spoon can stand up in,” as she describes it, though a splash of cream from one of her cows is sometimes a nice touch.

When it comes to entertaining, her approach can be summed up as “We’re all in it together.” “I don’t like that feeling of how a party is ‘supposed’ to be, and then you’re a wreck by the time your guests arrive,” she says. “I could never entertain the way Martha Stewart does, not in a million years. I would come unglued.” At holidays, guests show up in the morning and get their assignments. “I might tell my husband to make the stuffing, to melt butter and sauté a bunch of celery and

Clockwise from top left: Butters and son Emil; a bushel of fresh-picked string beans; daughter Megan, master pie maker.



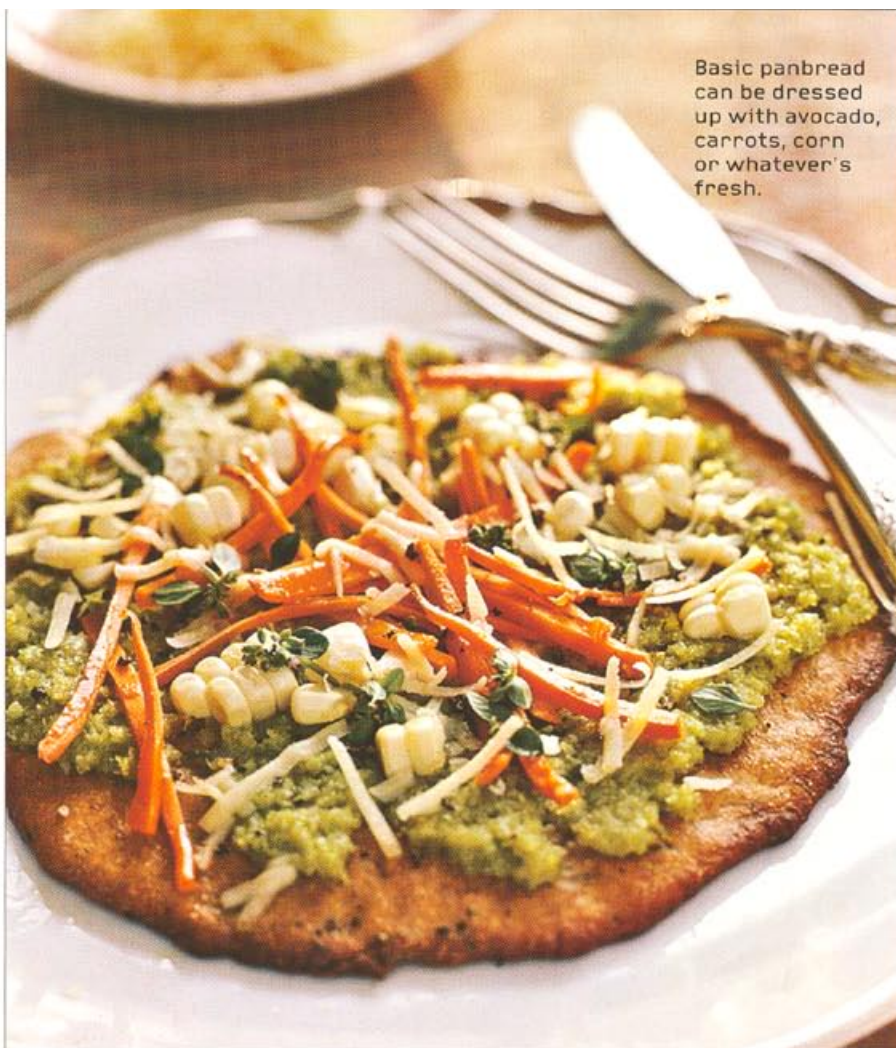


onions," Butters says. "I always made assignments for my kids to chop things and participate in making every meal. Megan was a master pie builder by the time she was 12."

Growing up in a working-class family in Ogden, Utah, the fourth of five children, Butters helped her father in his tool shop and her mother in the kitchen. "No one ever told me I couldn't do something," she says. Even as a child, she was attracted to both camping ("We all slept outside in sleeping bags in the summer") and commerce ("I was always saying, 'Let's sell this'"). The farm she lives on now has been her dream since adolescence. "You know when you want something so much you can taste it?" she asks. "When I was a teenager, I conjured a fantasy of a farm at the end of a dirt road. I would be this rough-and-ready woman. I would be building things."

As an adult, Butters survived many lean years; one Christmas she was so poor that the only presents she could afford were flashlights for her kids. In 1993 she married the farmer next door, Nick Ogle, and they soldiered on together. Then, 11 years ago, Butters's characteristic can-do competence and will-do attitude were put to the test when a fire destroyed her home. "I kept thinking, I am losing everything, but I have my kids," she remembers. "I woke up the next morning, assessed the damage and got busy. That's what I've always done: Farmers and ranchers simply have to get on with it. Fire burned your house down? Well, get going and rebuild."

Typically, Butters is now dreaming up all sorts of new plans. This will be the second season of MaryJane's Country Club, where for a \$100 membership fee, people gain daily access to the farm from dawn until dusk. There are sandboxes for children, training sessions about tool use for adults, and produce to pick and take home. Further, Butters is expanding the offerings on her Web site ([maryjanesfarm.com](http://maryjanesfarm.com)) to include outdoor furniture, wallpaper, tools for women and, yes, a MaryJane



Basic panbread can be dressed up with avocado, carrots, corn or whatever's fresh.

doll. Long resistant to hosting a television show, Butters has come around and is now developing *One Farm Woman*, a series about how to be a farm girl. "I don't have a television," she says, "but I can be on television."

To those who make the mistake of suggesting she may have taken on too much, Butters scoffs: "I don't want anyone telling me to be cautious or rolling their eyes. I stay away from the eye-rollers." She also insists all of her plans are true to her vision and not about making money for its own sake. Pointing to her own early struggles to make ends meet, she says she would ultimately like her earnings to help other women pushing to make a go of it in rural America, women like her neighbor, who has just planted 40 acres of wildflowers. "Women are the new face of agriculture," Butters says. "And we're kicking butt!"

## Summer Picnic

Garden Tomato Salad

FarmGirl Panbread

Curried Chicken Salad

Cabbage Patch Melt

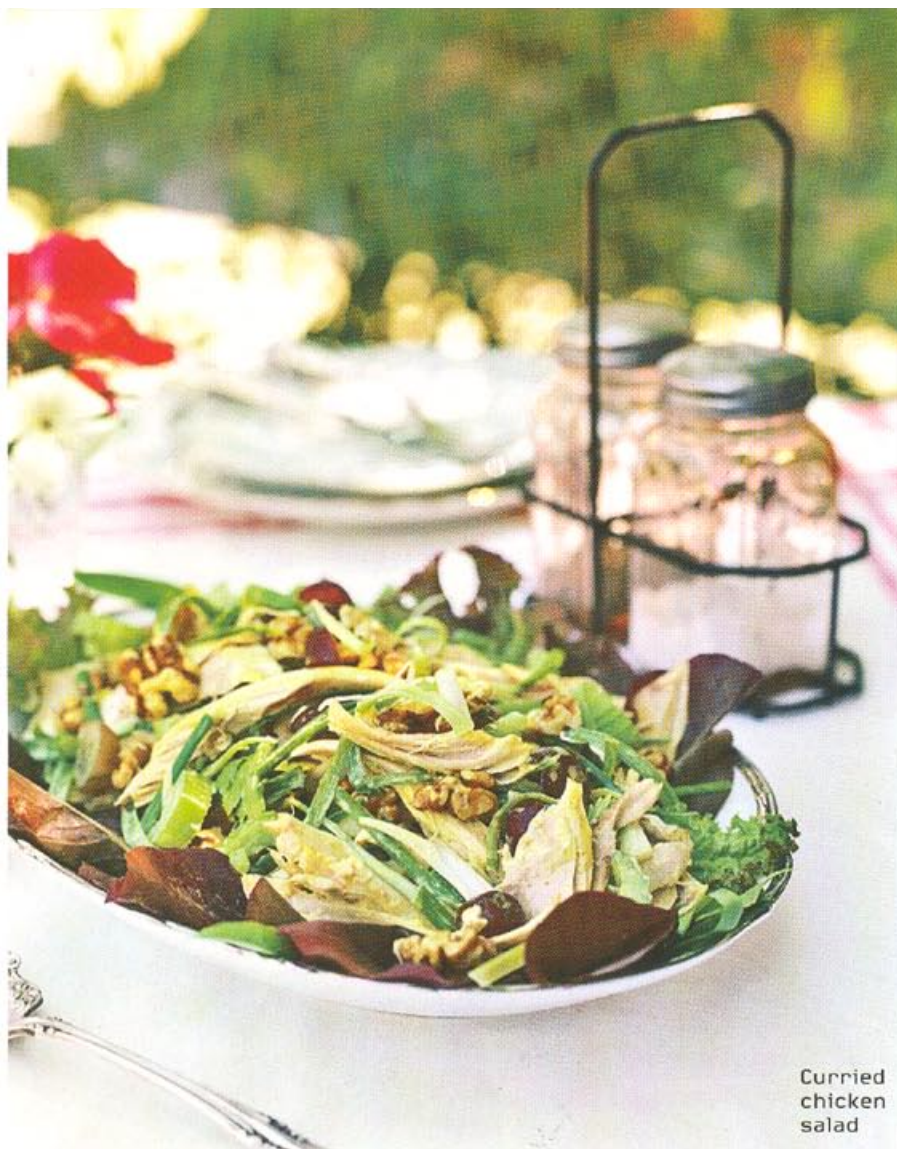
Black Walnut and  
Coconut Pound Cake with  
Coconut Syrup

Cherry Pie

### GARDEN TOMATO SALAD

- 4 pounds mixed tomatoes, seeded and diced (about 10 cups)
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- ½ cup olive oil
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- ½ cup pine nuts, toasted
- ½-1 cup crumbled feta cheese
- 1 cup thinly sliced scallions, white and green parts
- ½ cup chopped basil, parsley and thyme, mixed





Curried chicken salad

Toss all ingredients together. Serve immediately, or refrigerate up to 1 day, until ready to use.

#### FARMGIRL PANBREAD

- 2½ cups whole wheat flour
- 2½ cups all-purpose flour
- 2½ teaspoons baking powder
- 4 teaspoons sea salt
- ⅓ cup chopped fresh herbs (such as thyme, rosemary, parsley and tarragon)
- 5 tablespoons honey
- 5 tablespoons vegetable oil, plus more for brushing top of dough
- 1¾ cups cold water

1. Preheat the oven to 425°. In a large bowl, mix flours, baking powder, 3 teaspoons of the salt, and the herbs. Make a well in the center of the mixture. Pour in honey, oil and water; incorporate into the flour mixture until the dough comes together to form a large

ball. Add more flour or water by the tablespoonful as needed to make the dough tacky but not overly sticky.

2. Divide the dough into 10 balls and roll each out onto a floured work surface, making 6-inch disks. Brush the tops with oil, place on a baking sheet, and prick in several places with a fork. Sprinkle with remaining teaspoon of salt. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes, until golden brown on the bottom. Remove and let cool before serving.

#### CURRIED CHICKEN SALAD

- 2/3 cup orange juice
- 1 cup plain yogurt
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 2 teaspoons curry powder
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- ¼ teaspoon white pepper
- ½ cup thinly sliced scallions
- 1 cup diced celery (2 stalks)
- 1 cup red seedless grapes, halved
- 1 cup toasted and coarsely

- chopped walnuts
- 8 cups cooked and diced boneless, skinless chicken breasts

1. Blend orange juice, yogurt and honey with a whisk until smooth. Stir in curry powder, ginger, salt and pepper.
2. In a large bowl, mix scallions, celery, grapes, walnuts and chicken. Pour in yogurt mixture, and mix well. Serve immediately, or refrigerate up to 1 day, until ready to use.

#### CABBAGE PATCH MELT

- 2 cups cooked quinoa
- 2 cups fresh mushrooms, finely chopped
- ½ cup walnuts, finely chopped
- 1 cup dried bread crumbs
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh tarragon
- 1-2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
- ½ cup onion, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- ⅓ cup olive oil, plus more for grilling
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 3 cups grated Swiss cheese
- 10 large cabbage leaves

1. Stir quinoa, mushrooms, walnuts, bread crumbs, salt, herbs, onion, garlic, ⅓ cup olive oil, mustard and eggs in a large bowl until well combined. Form the mixture into 10 small, flat patties. In a nonstick skillet over medium heat, heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil; cook patties for 3 to 4 minutes on each side, until golden brown. (This can be done 1 day in advance; refrigerate until ready to use.)

2. Preheat the grill. To assemble: Place each cabbage leaf on a 10-inch piece of aluminum foil lightly brushed with olive oil. Place a patty on each cabbage leaf, and top with cheese. Fold in sides of cabbage over filling, roll up, and enclose with foil. Grill over open fire until hot and cheese is melted (or bake in a preheated 350° oven for 15 minutes, or until patties are heated through).

#### BLACK WALNUT AND COCONUT POUND CAKE

- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup safflower oil
- 4 large eggs
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon baking soda



- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 2 teaspoons coconut extract
- 1 cup chopped black or English walnuts
- 1 cup flaked coconut
- Coconut syrup (recipe follows)

1. Preheat the oven to 325°. Grease and flour a 10-inch tube pan.
2. In the bowl of an electric mixer, combine sugar, oil and eggs. Beat well for 2 minutes on high speed.
3. Combine flour, salt, baking soda and baking powder in a large bowl. Combine buttermilk and extract in a small bowl. Add sugar mixture to flour mixture alternately with buttermilk mixture, beating well after each addition. Stir in nuts and coconut. Pour batter into prepared tube pan. Bake for 1 hour, or until a toothpick inserted in the top comes out clean.
4. Pour hot coconut syrup over hot cake. Let cake remain in pan 4 hours

to absorb syrup, then turn it out onto a serving plate.

#### Coconut Syrup

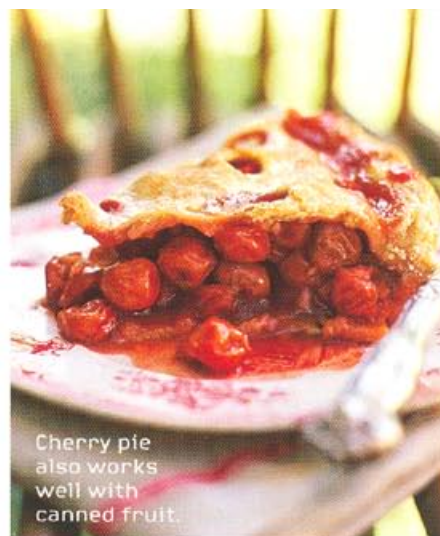
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup water
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 teaspoon coconut extract

Combine sugar, water and butter in a saucepan. Bring to a gentle boil, and heat for 5 minutes. Remove from heat, and stir in extract.

#### CHERRY PIE Piecrust

- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup (2 sticks) cold unsalted butter
- 5 tablespoons ice water

In a bowl, sift together flour, sugar and salt. Using a pastry blender or fork, cut butter into flour mixture



Cherry pie also works well with canned fruit.

until it resembles coarse meal. Sprinkle ice water evenly over the surface, 1 tablespoon at a time; stir until moistened. Gather dough into a ball, and gently press into an 8-inch disk. Wrap tightly with plastic wrap; chill for 1 hour, or freeze for up to 3 weeks. (If freezing, remove dough 1 hour ahead of time before rolling out.)

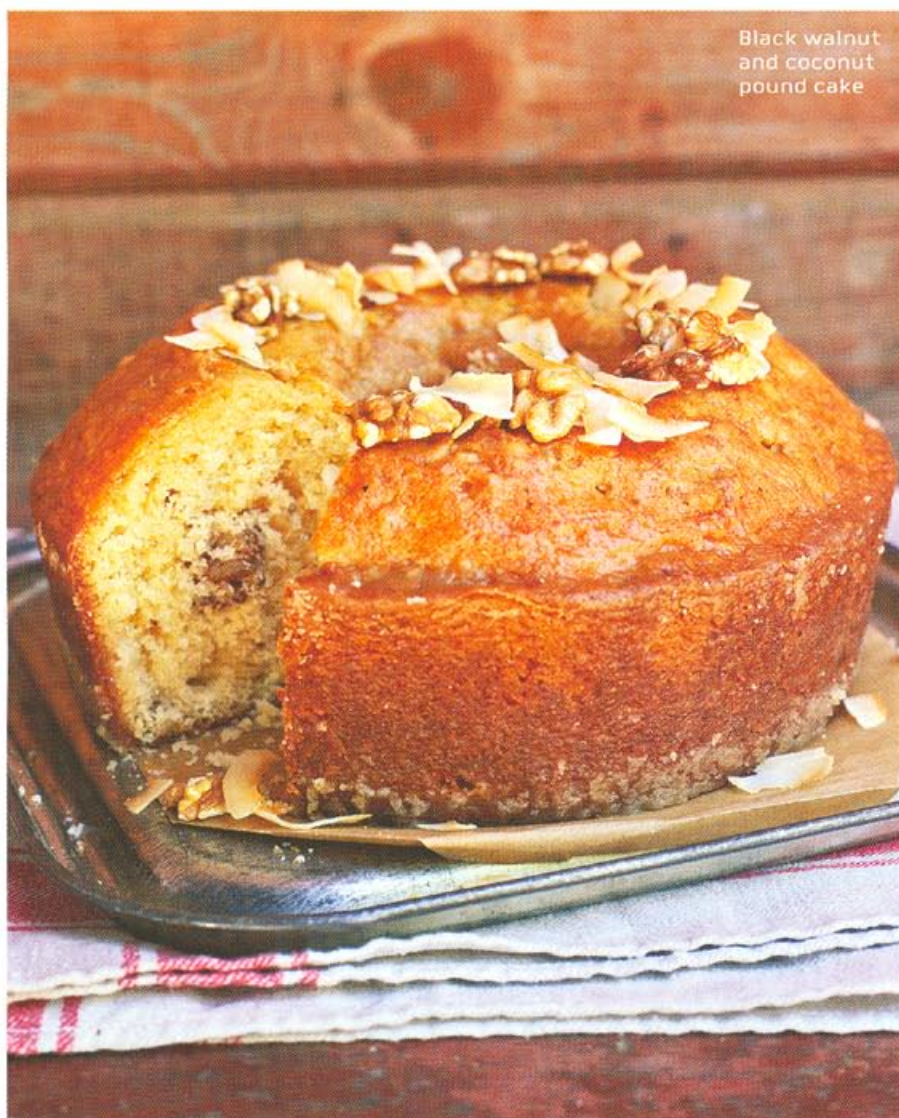
#### Filling

- 1 cup sugar, plus 1 tablespoon for sprinkling (if cherries are sweet, use 1/4 cup sugar)
- 1/3 cup cornstarch or rice starch
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 5 cups fresh, pitted sweet cherries (or 2 15-ounce cans water-packed tart cherries, drained)
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons almond extract
- 1 tablespoon milk

1. Mix 1 cup sugar, cornstarch, cinnamon and salt in a small bowl. Combine cherries, lemon juice and almond extract in a large bowl. Pour sugar mixture over cherries, and toss. Let stand for 30 minutes.

2. Preheat the oven to 400°. Divide dough in half and roll out each half into a 12-inch circle. Fit one piece of the crust into a 9-inch pan. Pour cherry filling into crust. Place other piece of crust on top. Trim and crimp bottom and top crusts together. Cut a few slits in the top crust, brush with milk, and sprinkle with 1 tablespoon of the sugar. Bake for 30 minutes, and then cover the edge with strips of aluminum foil to prevent overbrowning.

3. Bake for another 25 minutes, until the crust is golden brown and juices are bubbling. Remove foil, and let cool before serving. **M**



Black walnut and coconut pound cake



