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› Back to Basics: A Complete Guide to Traditional Skills, Third Edition Instruction Manual

**Skyhorse 1602392331**

# Back to Basics: A Complete Guide to Traditional Skills, Third Edition

Your comprehensive guide to self-sufficient living and traditional skills.

## INTRODUCTION TO TRADITIONAL SKILLS

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This guide, the Third Edition of 'Back to Basics: A Complete Guide to Traditional Skills,' offers extensive information for individuals interested in learning and applying fundamental living skills. It covers a wide array of topics essential for a self-sufficient lifestyle, drawing inspiration from historical practices and adapting them for contemporary application. The content is presented with clear instructions, supported by numerous illustrations, photographs, and charts to facilitate understanding and practical implementation.

The book aims to empower readers with the knowledge to engage in activities such as cultivating their own food, managing natural resources, crafting handmade items, and maintaining a household with traditional methods. It serves as a foundational resource for anyone looking to reconnect with sustainable living practices.

THIRD EDITION

# BACK TO BASICS



A COMPLETE GUIDE TO TRADITIONAL SKILLS  
BUYING AND WORKING LAND • GENERATING YOUR OWN ENERGY  
RAISING LIVESTOCK • ENJOYING YOUR HARVEST  
HOUSEHOLD SKILLS AND CRAFTS • AND MORE

EDITED BY ABIGAIL R. GEHRING

*Image: The cover of the 'Back to Basics' book, showcasing various aspects of traditional living including fresh produce, woodworking, a windmill, and stacked firewood.*

## OVERVIEW OF CONTENT

The 'Back to Basics' guide is structured into several key parts, each focusing on a distinct area of traditional skills and self-sufficiency. This section provides a brief overview of the topics covered within the manual.

### **Video: Book Overview by Autmazing**

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*Video: An overview of the 'Back to Basics' book, showcasing various sections and content, including bread making, maple sugaring, sausage preparation, gardening, wind power, canning, dairy production, hooked rugs, woodworking, household recipes, stenciling, and celebrating holidays.*

### **Video: Book Overview by Seas of Wonder**

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*Video: A detailed look inside the 'Back to Basics' book, highlighting its comprehensive coverage of traditional skills and homesteading topics.*

# PART ONE: LAND AND BUILDING

This section guides readers through the process of acquiring and developing land for a self-sufficient homestead. It covers essential aspects of property selection, home planning, and construction techniques using traditional materials.

- **Buying Country Property:** Considerations for selecting suitable land.
- **Planning Your Home:** Designing and siting your dwelling.
- **Building Structures:** Instructions for constructing log cabins, adobe homes, stone houses, and barns.
- **Water Supply and Sanitation:** Developing reliable water sources and waste management systems.
- **Fireplace Construction:** Design and building of efficient fireplaces.
- **Stone Walls and Brick Pavements:** Techniques for durable outdoor structures.
- **Fences:** Building various types of fences for property and livestock management.

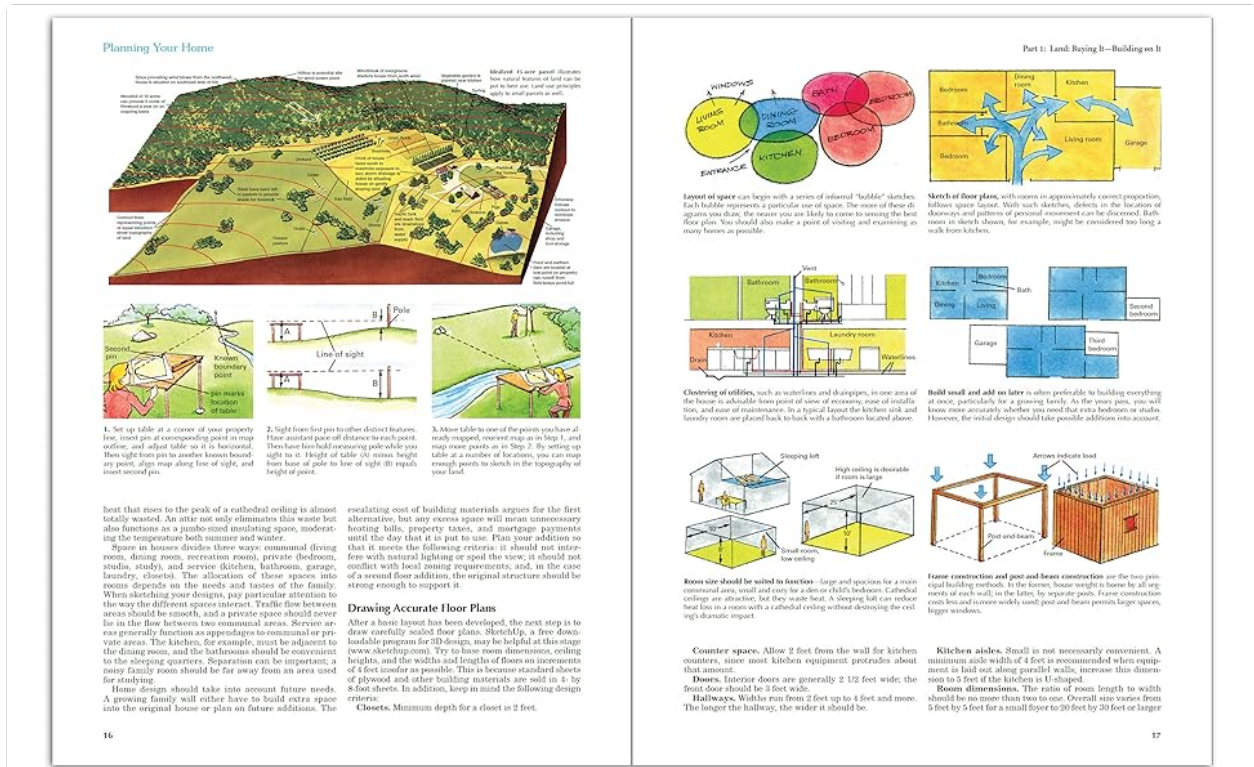


Image: Detailed illustrations from the book showing exterior and interior home planning layouts and designs.

# PART TWO: ENERGY FROM WOOD, WATER, WIND, AND SUN

This section explores various methods for generating and conserving energy using natural resources, focusing on sustainable and traditional approaches.

- **Making Your Home Energy Efficient:** Strategies for reducing energy consumption.
- **Wood as Fuel:** Techniques for harvesting and utilizing wood for heating and cooking.
- **Heating with Wood:** Installation and maintenance of wood-burning systems.
- **Waterpower:** Harnessing water flow for energy generation.
- **Wind Power:** Utilizing wind for mechanical work or electricity generation.
- **Solar Energy:** Basic principles and applications of solar power.
- **Other Energy Sources:** Exploration of additional sustainable energy options.

# PART THREE: RAISING YOUR OWN VEGETABLES, FRUIT, AND LIVESTOCK

Learn how to cultivate your own food and raise animals for sustenance, covering gardening techniques, pest control, and animal husbandry.

- **The Kitchen Garden:** Planning and maintaining a productive vegetable garden.
- **Gardening in Limited Space:** Maximizing yield in small areas.
- **Herb Gardens:** Cultivating herbs for culinary and medicinal uses.
- **Fruits and Nuts:** Growing various fruit trees and nut-bearing plants.
- **Pest Control:** Natural and traditional methods for managing garden pests.
- **Grains and Grasses:** Growing staple crops and forage for livestock.
- **Beekeeping:** Establishing and maintaining beehives for honey and pollination.
- **Fish Farming:** Setting up and managing small-scale fish ponds.
- **Raising Livestock:** Care and management of various farm animals, including chickens, sheep, and more.

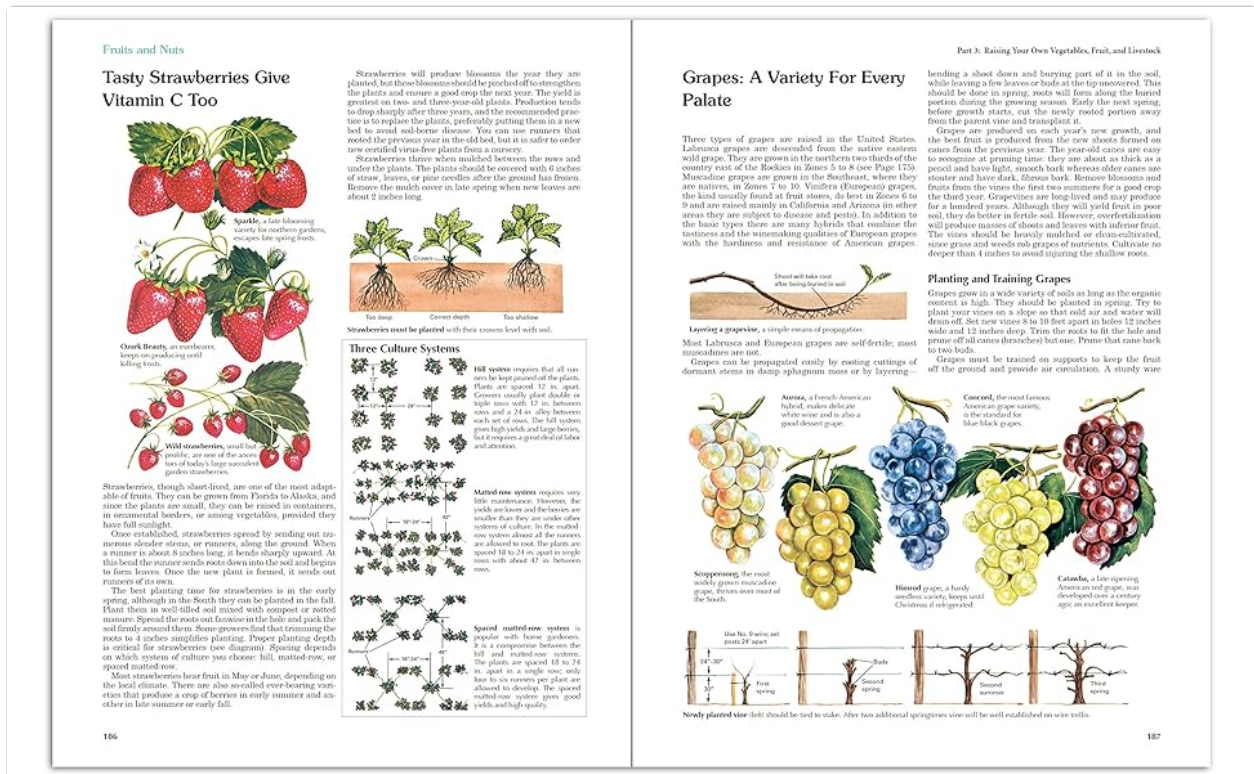


Image: Detailed illustrations from the book showing how to plant and care for strawberries, grapes, and other edible plants.

# PART FOUR: ENJOYING YOUR HARVEST THE YEAR ROUND

This section focuses on techniques for preserving food and making various homemade products to ensure a year-round supply from your harvest.

- **Preserving Produce:** Methods for canning, drying, and storing fruits and vegetables.
- **Preserving Meat and Fish:** Techniques for curing, smoking, and storing meat and fish.
- **Making Your Own Dairy Products:** Instructions for making cheese, butter, and other dairy items.

- **Maple Sugaring:** Tapping maple trees and processing syrup.
- **Homemade Beverages:** Recipes for traditional drinks.
- **Baking Bread:** Fundamental bread-making techniques, including sourdough.
- **Regional Cooking:** Traditional recipes and cooking methods.
- **Cooking With Wood:** Utilizing wood-fired ovens and stoves for cooking.

### Baking Bread

out the dough onto a lightly floured board, make a ball, or counter-top. Sprinkle the dough lightly with flour. As shown in the illustration at bottom left, knead by rolling the dough toward you, then push down with the heels of your hands. Fold the dough over again, give it a quarter turn, and repeat the kneading by to develop a shaggy texture. Continue kneading and rolling for 10 minutes or until the dough is smooth and elastic. To test the dough to see if it has been kneaded sufficiently, press two fingers into it about 1/2 in. deep; the dough should spring back from the dough into a ball.

**First rising.** Grease a large mixing bowl with about 1/2 cup of softened butter. Place the ball of dough into the bowl and roll the dough around to cover it with butter. This will keep the surface from drying out and cracking in the dough rises. Cover with a kitchen towel or plastic wrap, and let rise in a warm, draft-free place (80°F to 85°F) for 1 to 1 1/2 hours or until doubled in bulk. If the room is cold, put the dough in a bowl, cover, and place the bowl in front of a heater or on a surface over a pan of hot water, or near heat on a radiator. If you have a wood stove, the warming room over the stove is ideal for rising.

To test if the dough has risen sufficiently, make an indentation by pressing two fingers into the dough about 1/2 in. deep. If the dough does not spring back, it is ready. If the dough has risen a little too much, it will not be seriously affected; however, excessive rising can change the texture and flavor of the finished product.

Punch the dough down with your fist to deflate it. Turn it out on a lightly floured board, then knead until about two minutes. Cut the dough in half with a sharp knife and shape each half into a smooth ball. Cover with a towel and let rest about five minutes.





**Shaping the dough.** Use a rolling pin to shape each half of dough into a 16- to 12-in. rectangle, then roll the dough up tightly from the short sides (shown left). Next, press the ends together to seal them, and fold the ends so that they are underneath the rolls (shown right). Let the loaves carefully and place them in the greased pans with their seam sides down.

**Second rising.** Brush the top of each loaf with 1/2 cup melted butter. Cover pans with a towel. Let rise as before in a warm, draft-free place until the dough has doubled in bulk, or when a finger pressed lightly near the edge bounces back. The pans for the second rising are to give the dough a fine grain. This rising will take less time than the first rising, 1 1/2 to 1 1/4 hours is typical.

**In case of an interruption.** If at any time during the first or second rising you cannot complete the bread-making, punch the dough down as you did after the first rising, and place it in a buttered bowl. Set a clean cloth over the top of the dough, weigh it down with a brick or other heavy object, and place the bowl in a refrigerator. The cold plus the weight will bring the action of the yeast almost to a halt.

**Baking the bread.** For glazed loaves, gently beat one egg yolk with 1/2 cup of milk. Lightly brush the top of each loaf with this mixture just before putting the bread in the oven.

Bake the loaves 40 to 50 minutes on the lower rack of an oven that has been preheated to 300°F. Place the bread pans so that their tops are as close to the center of the oven as possible. In order to permit adequate circulation of hot air, however, the pans should not touch each other or the sides of the oven. To check if the bread is ready, tap the top of a loaf with your middle finger (left). If it is done, the bread will sound hollow. To test further, take a probe (such as a bread tester) from the top of the pan, and tap the bottom of the loaf with your finger (right); it should sound hollow. If it is soft on the bottom, return the loaf to the pan, bake an additional 5 to 10 minutes, and test again.

Remove the pans from the oven, turn the loaves on their sides in a rack, and place in a draft-free location. For any slicing, the bread should cool completely—about two to three hours. To store the bread, put it in plastic bags and tie securely or keep it in a bread box, or freeze. Bread will keep at least a month in the freezer. If you use only a small amount of bread at a time, slice the loaf before freezing and remove slices from the freezer as needed. For quick thawing of a whole loaf, wrap it in aluminum foil and heat in a 300°F oven about 25 to 40 minutes.

### Part 4. Enjoying Your Harvest the Year Round

Bake in a preheated 400°F oven 10 to 15 minutes or until golden. Transfer to wire racks and brush the loaves with melted butter. Dust with confectioners' sugar. **Makes about 16 loaves.** To make the filling, cook and drain the prunes. Peel and crush with a fork. Stir in sugar and cinnamon.

For a cherry filling fill each depression with cherry preserves.

**Anadama Bread**

The story goes that this bread was invented by a New England fisherman who was angry at his wife, Anna. For serving cornmeal and molasses day after day. One night, in an attempt to create a new dish, he mixed flour and yeast into the cornmeal and molasses and placed the mixture in the oven to bake. While eating the bread, he constantly reminded himself, "Anna, damn her!"

**1 1/2 cup yellow cornmeal**    1 package active dry yeast  
**1 1/2 cup white flour**    1/2 cup warm water  
**3/4 cup butter or shortening**    1/4 cup dark molasses  
**2 tsp salt**    3 eggs, lightly beaten  
**3/4 cup boiling water**    3 cups sifted all-purpose flour

Combine the cornmeal, butter or shortening, molasses, salt, and boiling water in a small bowl. Cool until lukewarm. Sprinkle the yeast over the warm water in a large bowl. Let sit for five minutes. Add the egg, cornmeal mixture, and half the flour. Beat with wooden spoon until well mixed. Stir in the remaining flour. Use hands toward the end to mix well. Shape into a ball, pat in a buttered bowl, and turn to coat the surface. Cover; let until doubled in bulk. Punch down.

Turn into a well buttered 9- by 5- by 3-in. loaf pan. Cover with a towel and let rise until doubled in bulk. Sprinkle the top of the dough with cornmeal. Bake in a preheated 350°F oven 40 to 45 minutes. Cool the bread on a rack. **Makes one loaf.**

**Sally Lunn**

One of the popular favorites of the name's origin is that the bread was once baked as loaves. The golden top and white bottoms of the loaves resembled the sun and the moon, or *solis luna*, as it was called in French.

**1 package active dry yeast**    1/2 cup (1 stick) butter, melted  
**1/3 cup sugar**    1/2 tsp salt  
**1/2 cup warm water**    3 eggs, lightly beaten  
**1/2 cup warm milk**    3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour

In a mixing bowl combine the yeast, sugar, and warm water. Stir to dissolve. Add the milk, butter, and salt. Add the beaten eggs and mix well with a wooden spoon. Add about 1 cup of flour at a time, beating well after each addition. Add enough flour to make a stiff batter.

Place in a clean, well buttered bowl, cover with a damp cloth, and let rise in a warm, draft-free place until doubled in bulk. Beat the dough ball with a wooden spoon for about one minute. Transfer to a buttered 9-in. angel food pan, and let rise in a warm place about 45 minutes or until the dough has doubled in bulk.

Bake in a preheated 350°F oven 45 to 50 minutes until golden brown on top and hollow sounding when tapped. A toothpick or metal skewer inserted into the bread will come out clean and dry. Unmold and serve hot or warm. Cut into wedges with lots of butter. **Makes 8 to 10 servings.**

**A Collection of Quick Breads for Hurry-Up Baking**

Quick breads are just that; they can be made in much less time than yeast breads because they do not require kneading or rising and can be cooked as soon as they are mixed.

Image: Illustrations from the book demonstrating the process of baking different types of bread, such as sourdough, kolaches, and anadama bread.

## PART FIVE: SKILLS AND CRAFTS FOR HOME AND HOMESTEAD

This section provides instructions for various traditional crafts and skills that contribute to a self-sufficient and creative household.

- **Natural Dyes:** Creating dyes from plants and natural materials.
- **Spinning:** The art of twisting fleece into yarn.
- **Weaving:** Techniques for creating textiles.
- **Hooked Rugs:** Crafting rugs from scraps and rags.
- **Braided Rugs:** Making braided rugs.
- **Patchwork Quilting:** Designing and sewing quilts.
- **Rope and Twine:** Making your own ropes and cords.
- **Tanning and Leatherwork:** Processing hides and crafting leather goods.
- **Woodworking:** Basic carpentry and furniture making.
- **Broommaking:** Crafting brooms from natural fibers.
- **Brushmaking:** Creating various types of brushes.
- **Metalworking:** Forging and shaping metal for tools and household items.
- **Household Recipes:** Making natural perfumes, cleaners, and balms.
- **Flower Drying and Pressed Flowers:** Preserving flowers for decorative purposes.

- **Gourd Craft:** Creating functional and decorative items from gourds.
- **Candlemaking:** Traditional methods of making candles.
- **Soapmaking:** Crafting homemade soaps.
- **Basketry:** Weaving baskets from natural materials.

## PART SIX: RECREATION AT HOME AND IN THE WILD

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This section explores traditional forms of recreation and engagement with nature, offering ideas for leisure and outdoor activities.

- **Old-time Good Times:** Traditional games and pastimes.
- **Crafting a Dulcimer:** Instructions for building a musical instrument.
- **Celebrating Holidays:** Traditional holiday customs and crafts.
- **Canoeing and Kayaking:** Guides for water-based recreation.
- **Wilderness Camping:** Tips for camping and outdoor living.
- **Outdoors in Winter:** Activities and survival tips for cold weather.
- **Fishing:** Techniques for catching fish.
- **Living With Nature:** Understanding and interacting with the natural environment.

## SPECIFICATIONS

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## SUPPORT & RESOURCES

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For further information, inquiries, or to explore additional resources related to traditional skills and self-sufficient living, please refer to the publisher's official channels. The publisher, Skyhorse, is dedicated to providing valuable content in this field.

- **Publisher:** Skyhorse Publishing
- **Author:** Abigail Gehring
- **Additional Reading:** Explore other titles by Skyhorse Publishing for more in-depth knowledge on

specific traditional skills.

This manual serves as a comprehensive starting point. Continuous learning and practical application are encouraged for mastering these skills.