# An Anarchist's Cookbook

## a blog about food & lifestyles outside 'consumer society'

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## Part 0: *'About the blog'*; an introduction to *'An Anarchist's Cookbook'*

I'm writing this rather long and detailed theoretical splurge of consciousness precisely because I don't want to have to endlessly repeat this as part of my blog posts. Hence, unless I want to examine a small aspect in more detail, I'll simply refer people back to paragraphs within this page.

The embedded links in this file are there for a reason: They may tell you stuff you might not know – and which you really ought to know in order to understand where this blog, and the ideas in it, are coming from.

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**Simple food, simply prepared, can reinvigorate the body and cheer the mind. Good food, well prepared, can restore a person who has been ill back to better health in a few days. Even basic food, freely shared, can bring people together and make an enjoyable event of any gathering.**

If you want to exercise any control or choice over your life – which is at the heart of anarchist debates whatever their specific 'tribe' – then you have to have influence and agency over your food and diet. This blog explores the practical realities of living a more authentic, directly experienced life outside (as far as practically possible) the economic controls of consumer culture.

In this blog I'll document the practical aspects of my lifestyle, and how putting food at the heart of a simple living strategy can free-up your life to explore other options than those offered by mainstream culture. This is definitely a 'primitivist' approach, and one which seeks to implement many of the changes required to meet the imminent ecological breakdown caused by mass consumption.

Please note, this blog documents my 'indoor' activities, which is only half the story. For the other half see the 'outdoor' companion to this blog, *'Long Walks & Anarcho-Primitivism'* – which looks at learning simple living skills outdoors, as practically as possible, so that you may carry out these ideas more easily indoors.

### A little more detail to muse upon…

*Are you an anarchist?* (seriously, click that link and watch the video!)

The reality is that I'm surrounded by anarchists all the time, but most of them don't realise they're anarchists – mainly because it is *non-anarchists* who have dictated what that term popularly means, not the words of actual anarchists from the last four centuries.

This blog has been created because, quite simply, people find it difficult when I talk about other issues in the context of food; and they complain about that.

For example, in 2020 I wrote a reply to George Monbiot on the issue of the film, *'Planet of the Humans'*. I discussed his comments in the context of spending a day in the kitchen, cooking scones, and dancing to music while doing so. Many didn't get the link I sought to make.

How we each react to the ecological issues of today is completely based within the minutiae of our daily lives; not some abstract grand plan we hope that politicians will enact. Monbiot seeks to externalise that imperative to act into green energy solutions so that 'radical' change is not required personally; yet another take on old trend of psychological denial where the need for personal change is externalised by saying, *"Take this pill"*, or, *"Don't worry, technology will save you."*

We're beyond that point: If the affluent West had heeded the message in the 1970s perhaps there would have been room for negotiation; but today, significantly contracting

the consumption of the globally affluent (i.e., us!) is the only viable mechanism given the time available.

Traditionally the idea of 'having less', or 'cutting consumption', is shrouded in overtones of hair-shirt piety, religious observance, and the stoic tolerance of discomfort. The point of my reply to Monbiot was that I could cut energy consumption, waste production, and pollution – without the need to outsource that to green technologies – by changing the arrangement of my lifestyle to be simpler and more directly related to the goods I consumed (in this case, scones). More importantly, that this could be a joyous experience even when it required personal effort (hence dancing around the kitchen doing this!).

I think the point was lost precisely because the unspoken objective of contemporary environmentalism is not "saving the planet"; but, in the face of ecological collapse, finding ways to preserve the excess consumption of affluent Western consumers via technological means. Anything, it seems, but finding the true change in outlook required to resolve our differences between the implicit expectations of the modern lifestyle, and our natural place within our environment of this planet.

*Reluctantly then, I have decided to excise that troublesome, food-related content from The Meta-Blog in the future. Instead, akin to the care and maintenance of a gorgeous sourdough culture, giving it a large feed of practical ideological perspective, I revivify those aspects here as a new blog on practical change!*

Of course, it's a very big jump – from the basic identification of what 'anarchism' is to deciding whether it's possible to cook with it, or use as an ingredient to spice-up the food in your daily existence.

**To try and help explain I'll break the idea down into four principles, outlined below:**

## 1. Food & Authority:
### *"There is no authority but your stomach!"*

*Food and authority?* What on Earth does that mean? Well, think about it for a moment: There are more regulations governing the global trade in bananas than weapons of war; what is a recipe other than a list of dictatorial instructions?; and, which do you put in the cup first, *the tea or the milk?*

Food involves politics, economics, cultural traditions, and fanatical fashions; the entire issue is riddled with many complex and often contradictory forms of 'authority'. Rarely does it care how you prefer to 'be', but instead promotes an authoritarian compliance to external standards. When it comes to food and diet, our personal preference of how we might prefer to 'be' is lost in those demands for compliance to imposed rules.

Does that make cooking food a discussion about anarchism?

Well, as expressed in Chomsky's most basic definition of what anarchism practically is:

> *"That is what I have always understood to be the essence of anarchism: the conviction that the burden of proof has to be placed on authority, and that it should be dismantled if that burden cannot be met."*
> Noam Chomsky, *Language and Politics* (2006)

The quote in the heading above is a twist on the lyric from the album, *'Yes Sir, I Will'*, by *Crass*:

> *"It is up to each one of us, alone, to do our best. We must learn to overcome our fears. We must realise that the strength that they have, Is the strength that we give them. It is you, the passive observer who has given them this power. You are being used and abused, And will be discarded as soon as they've bled what they want from you. You must learn to live with your own conscience, Your own morality, Your own decision, Your own self. You alone can do it. There is no authority but yourself."*

That says 'food' to me!

For example, consider the 'illusion of intellectual control' over your animal nature:

Sit in a room, on the Internet, roving its virtual playground, and keep doing that; how long till you get hungry?; how long until your body's own natural animistic nature begins to assert its desires over your conscious desire to play with your highly developed technology? And even if you work on-line and order-in food from there, how much 'free expression' does that really give you outside of what that system permits? *Or worse, what if your computer broke?; or someone arbitrarily turned-off your Internet access?*

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Like I said: *"There is no authority but your stomach!"* Getting hungry is entirely natural; it's how we consume good wholesome food, assuming you have it, that's the greater issue of how we satisfy those base instincts – freeing us to consider those more abstract things that humans seeks to pursue in their daily lives once those animistic feelings have been attended to.

Essentially food is *cultural*: Often that culture is based upon nationality, ethnic identity, or religion; increasingly though, especially in the over-developed states, that culture is dictated by the economics of global commodity agribusiness and food processing corporations – even while it pretends to honour those older, social rules on food. And because your animal desires can overwhelm your intellect, often subconsciously, your stomach gives those external influences a powerful hold over your daily life.

Or, as John Pilger put it, *'Zap! The Weapon is Food'*.

Food is not an open choice; which further exacerbates those controls (in most over-developed states) over our largely industrialised, urbanised diet. It's not just that the food on offer is the product of highly engineered agricultural, processing, and logistics systems; the urban environment closes-off the simple and practical alternatives to participation in that system by prohibiting access to land for 'ordinary' people.

Yes, there are always going to be choices for food technically open to all; but those choices are governed by economic factors that, in practical reality, limit access to food to some extent for the majority of people.

In this debate people often talk about the 'cost' of food – deflecting the debate from the structural inequalities which create this to the blandly economic evaluation of prices.

The practical reality is that in poorer areas there may be no easily accessible shops to buy wholesome food; and an increasing problem for food banks is that those in poverty are living in housing conditions without a fully functional kitchen, or they may not even be able to afford the electric or gas to cook what they are given.

How we deal with that socially has always been political. How we deal with that practically, though, in order to make that personal perspective 'real', has to take those political principles and give them a real voice through the conduct of our daily actions.

My perceptions of anarchism arose out of the early 1980s peace and environmental movements; and admittedly the views expressed here are shaped by the struggles of that time. As I perceive the debate in that context, I find that today it rarely focusses on the 'punk' option: *'Do-It-Yourself'* .

Traditionally the debate about DIY food has centred on access to land and skills, or the ability to trade. I think we have to take one further step back – *to nutrition and health*, and how that influences choice. That's because unless you prioritise your actions toward supporting your natural, biological, 'animistic' self, you cannot change the more complicated social factors that make-up human society – or rather, create the independent means of shelter and sustenance in order to allow those other things to take place.

What is the best way to get a good diet is incredibly complex because, due to genetic variability at the biological level, we are 'not all the same'.

More importantly though, apart from genetics, we have to get away from there being one idea of the 'ideal' lifestyle or diet that people should follow; and focus instead on what prevents people from eating whatever diet makes them feel good and healthy. If you reduce food and diet to simplistic platitudes – that *'this is good'* or *'that is bad'*, or worse, *'eat this because it…'* – then you deny the individual the freedom to discover what is best for them through practical trial and error.

It doesn't matter if you want to be a product-eating consumer vegan or a feral consumer of road-kill; whatever options you might choose around food offers-up many forms of hierarchical authority, that in various ways seek to control or censure your access to what you wish to consume.

**Food is an issue where there are many people telling you what you can't or what you should eat. At the other extreme, society does not facilitate people's choices to eat what they wish, unless that accords with the over-riding political-economy of the industrial food culture. Breaking that doesn't require the overthrow of government's and corporations;**

**it requires direct action to break those restrictions on accessing food through your daily routines.**

## 2. Anarcho-Primitivism: *"Culture has led us to betray our own aboriginal spirit"*

*'Anarcho-primitivism'* is a hard idea for many people to get their heads around (even a lot of self-professed 'anarchists').

Anarcho-primitivism challenges the notion that 'progress' is necessarily good, or has been a demonstrable success, in creating the modern world as we know it today; that exploitation and hierarchy evolve from the control and engineered scarcity of resources under 'developed' patterns of living; and that, in fact, 'progress' over the last few millennia of human development has been at the cost of bringing the planet to the brink of ecological destruction.

In contrast, it proposes that we need to strip away that extraneous 'stuff' from our lives, and live in a close equilibrium with the natural world which is what ultimately supports us.

The essence of this blog will be about documenting my time spent on an average day in the kitchen; *cooking*. The whole purpose of this, though, is to illustrate that I do not do this simply because I like cooking; but that the process surrounding my time cooking is at the root of the lifestyle I wish to lead.

Food, both how it is produced and the value we place upon it, is a reflection of how we choose to live – and a mechanism to develop greater economic freedom and personal liberty in our lives.

Primitivist notions of self, as with deep ecology, are based in relation to nature and place; and an identity 'rooted' in that place.

The Latin word for 'having roots' is *'radicalis'*; and it is from this word that we get the etymological origins of the word, *'radical'*.

Food is at the root of our lifestyle; *it is the foundation for how we live, irrespective of how we might choose to 'style' that 'life'.* Hence anything based around food must, by its nature, be considered, 'radical' – it must be based in relationship between all life, and our chosen life-style.

The title above is a quote from John Zerzan,

which very much sums up my own feelings about modernity:

> *"Culture has led us to betray our own aboriginal spirit and wholeness, into an ever-worsening realm of synthetic, isolating, impoverishing estrangement. Which is not to say that there are no more everyday pleasures, without which we would loose our humanness. But as our plight deepens, we glimpse how much must be erased for our redemption."*
>
> John Zerzan, *Running on Emptiness* (2002)

This is not a stand-alone blog. It exists within my broader work on deep ecology and ecological limits. More specifically though, this blog has been conceived as the 'indoor' counterpart to a blog I'm developing on outdoor walking and camping – *'Long Walks & Anarcho-Primitivism'*.

Before the crash of 2008, I used to run camping weekends with the The Free Range Network – where we communicated the skills of simple, ecological living. Being outdoors was an essential component to that. After all, if you could cook and exist comfortably in the middle of a field, how much easier would it be to act out those same ideas at home?

Problem was, after the crash, people didn't want to come along to those weekends. Why voluntarily learn to live simply when it was being enforced by Tory austerity measures?

We're now updating that work: It's become urgent that we do so.

Today we stand on the verge of a major pivot in the direction of 'modern' human society. The ecological limits that many academics have been researching, and trying to highlight for the past 50 years, have finally begun to bite.

Climate change, or rather the mechanics of the *carbon cycle*, is only one of about a dozen or so ecological limits; any one of which has the potential to up-end the 'modern' consumer society.

From the phosphate rock used to support intensive agriculture; to the imposition of limits on energy production due to *Peak Oil*; and the limits on the production of minerals for the renewable energy and electric cars environmentalists hoped would replace fossil fuels; things are going to change radically from here on – *whether people like that or not.*

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If we have reached a crisis of 'development', then to solve the immediate effects of that we need to look to the options available before we adopted this pattern of living.

There is only one broad philosophy which encompasses that today, and which seeks to adapt the operational basis of society to work within the constraints that will emerge in the next few decades: *'Anarcho-primitivism'*.

Most strands of contemporary environmentalism do not begin to encompass this idea because their outlook is based around reform of the existing systems of industrial development, in order to reduce impacts whilst maintaining the lifestyle created by industrialism. And because environmentalists focus on the downstream side of the economy, they are blind to the upstream impacts of resource depletion, and how that will soon disrupt society independently of climate change.

Of course, that doesn't mean we're all going to suddenly be living in caves (not unless you want to!) – as anarcho-primitivism's detractors would have you believe.

The basis of Anarcho-primitivism is that the best way to organise a solution to people's immediate, daily needs is locally, from the bottom-up, where the surrounding environment sustainably provides most of their sustenance. Yes, people will have to spend more time interacting with their immediate environment to produce that; and it means having much less of the 'products' of advanced industrialisation and consumerism – albeit only 10% to 15% of the global population had effective access to that lifestyle in any case (*a little factoid I must keep reminding affluent consumers of, as they all too often forget this, and how it reflects on their own privilege*).

Whether that new accommodation with reality is based on a very simple lifestyle for a small group working together, practising permaculture; or a large, more organised group living in a small settlement that would undertake more 'industrial'-style activity, and trading with their immediate hinterland; the first principle is we must accept a far lower level of energy and resource consumption to guarantee any civil future for all.

There are a wide range of future possibilities, depending how individuals seek to change their circumstances as the world around them challenges present-day expec-

tations. That again is why bottom-up diversity, rather than top-down authority, is vital so that we can trial as many options as we can to see which work, in which geographical areas, and which do not.

The only certain factor is that large-scale urbanism, based around 'urban resource islands' that require complex supply and logistics systems to operate, cannot be sustained as human society hits these various ecological limits.

Of course, we don't have to change from this course. If you're at the top of the global consumption pyramid (i.e., a member of the community who influence/govern this system) what would possibly motivate you to want to change?

We could continue the present-day logic of markets and capital accumulation and strip the Earth's last resources, ensuring only the fittest and most prepared would survive until the final holocaust – when even that lifestyle would no longer be viable. Quite literally, if you want to '*Save the Planet*' then strip and burn everything, and in five to ten million years: The toxins would be immobilised in sediment; the nuclear waste will have decayed; the plastics settled out of the ocean; and the climate stabilised in a new equilibrium… *Albeit there will be no humans present to appreciate that fact.*

That logic would merely confirm how stupid the human species really is; and how its rightful final extinction would usher in a new global ecosystem to support a diverse range of life, precisely because we were not there to mess it up. There is nothing that makes humans 'special' ranged alongside other species, and so there is no evidence to disprove our probable future extinction any more than dinosaurs or trilobites.

**If we want to prove that future wrong then it is not going rely on some new clever technology, or humans going into space; it will be that we finally reconcile our demands upon the Earth with our natural place as just another species on this planet – and start to live that truth as a practical, simple lifestyle alongside all other species.**

## 3. Food & Resilience: *"If they do not give you work or bread, then make bread"*

The media is obsessed by the world running out of food, and the urgent need to produce lots more to serve a growing, more affluent human population. Let me pass on a rather ignored factoid: *There is more than enough food produced in the world to feed everyone*. Some estimates say we produce enough food today for ten billion humans.

Just like food poverty in the UK, the reason that around a billion people are malnourished in the world today has nothing to do with production, and everything to do with poverty and inequality.

Likewise, despite the Western media's emphasis on technology and intensive production, a third of the world's food is produced by small farms *(each less than 2 hectares/5 acres)* on only a quarter of the world's farmland *(i.e., it's more efficient per unit area than industrialised monoculture cropping)*.

With adaptations based around integrated polyculture – *or* permaculture – there is no reason that small, local food production could not supply the entire world without the ecologically damaging impacts of intensive agriculture.

The title above is a twist on some words by Emma Goldman:

> *"Necessity knows no law, and the starving man has a natural right to a share of his neighbour's bread… Ask for work. If they do not give you work, ask for bread. If they do not give you work or bread, then take bread."*
>
> Emma Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays* (1910)

Goldman's words do not represent some advocated policy; they are an expression of reality. Starving people do not necessarily sit by to wait for death; and by comparison to any previous civic obligation, theft is a minor hazard to their well-being compared to a lingering death.

Now think bigger; think of the global human system that is nearing the tipping point of collapse. What is valid for the individual to do to avoid that possible scenario – certainly for the urbanised populations systematically removed from access to the land – as ecological limits disrupt the global human system

of food production and supply?; in effect, threatening starvation for over half of the world's population currently walled-up in urban areas.

If the powers the be are so down on people *taking* bread, why down they allow them to *make it* instead? The most simplistic answer is that it is the historic control of the means of production, beginning which the production of food when humans settled in geographically fixed communities, which has evolved the present-day hierarchy of the rulers and the ruled; and giving people the power to supply their own food would diminish that power.

We have to face the reality of our ecological state of affairs; and of the inability of nation states, and the economic interests they are subservient to, to make the necessary changes to adapt to it – because it means giving-up their historic control over society that arose with industrialisation.

Let's take one manifest, illustrative example of how modernity is unable to comprehend everyday ecological complexity, and how it affects us… *in our guts*:

There is currently a debate within nutrition and medical circles over what's called, *'double-burden malnutrition'*. WHO have defined this as, *'the coexistence of under-nutrition along with overweight and obesity, or diet-related non-communicable diseases, within individuals, households and populations, and across the lifecourse.'*

Put simply, developed states have adequate food, but the illnesses arising across the population show the signs of malnutrition.

The everyday dialogue on nutrition discusses 'macro-nutrient' measures such as calories, or grams of protein, but ignores the vital role of 'micro-nutrients' in diet. The result: *Malnutrition*. There's plenty of food, but it is as unsustaining as if the person did not eat enough – and the result of this are the varying kinds of ill-health that are associated with the 'developed-world' diet.

Even when micro-nutrients are discussed, it's often related to marketing a particular product, not recognising that natural variation in our genetics and gut biome makes every one of us react differently to differing levels of micro-nutrients. The result is that for some modern food can be addictive, lead-

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ing to weight gain; while for others it leads to nutritional deficiency because they cannot adapt to its highly engineered/nutrient poor nature.

As individuals, what we need to do is experiment with a mix of options to see which works for us rather than accepting one prescriptive cure or another. Of course, the one thing society makes it extremely difficult for us to do is opt-out of that system altogether, to partake of something more simple and natural *(unless you already have wealth to buy land to produce your own, or a high income to buy more expensive, less intensively grown or processed foods)*.

The standard response to this – _the illusion of control_ – is to lobby for: Better food standards; food labelling; bans on poor quality products; and within all that, better food production & supply systems. But that response falls into the trap of asking for reform; _and reform rarely ever results in systemic change_.

What does that seeming contradiction – *reform rarely ever results in systemic change* – mean?:

Farmers do not produce poor quality food because they consciously want to. They do it because that is what _the system demands_: From the design of the logistics chain; to the increasingly concentrated economic power of food _commodity aggregators_ and processors; to the finance of _intensive agribusiness_ operations; to the agro-tech. industry developing plants and seeds. The primary motivation is to create greater bulk for less expenditure – i.e., it is motivated by _productivist economics_, not nutrition.

The focus then is on all those 'macro-nutrient' values, not 'micro-nutrients'; on quantity rather than quality. If you want micro-nutrients, that's a whole different industry with its own unique economic model and questionable practices – _food supplements_.

Asking to change the agro-industrial system means changing not only the price of food, but the economic conditions governing its production – such as controls on debt-based economic finance, asset values, the use of proprietary technology and contracts to lock-in producers, as well as corporate regulatory policy to handle the concentrated economic power of processors and retailers. *That's not 'reform', that's radical change!*

Even then, the fact that people eat poor quality food and get sick can't be blamed solely on the agricultural production or food retailing system. People eat poorer diets due to underlying economic inequalities, especially inequalities in housing and education; albeit the food industry plays upon those vulnerabilities to market more of the same.

Changing food supply conditions, without massive social and economic reform across the whole of society, will not change the poor diet of many people in the developed world; because the influences on that are the result of the greater actions of the political-economy, not simply food supply and quality…

Hence, *reform rarely ever results in systemic change*.

The reason reform is the only option permitted for discussion, not 'radical' (as stated earlier, 'from the roots') change, is that true reform must disrupt historic patterns of activity; calling into question certain forms of accepted authority and _disrupting vested interests_ in the process. Political power uses the bureaucracy of _public administration_ to delay calls for change, and then further _restrict or delay action_ when decisions are made.

Truly 'radical' change would _bring into question_ the traditional basis of their control, as they would be required to defend those conflicted interests: Be that the historic control of a ruling minority over land assets; or the technocratic elite, increasingly based within the businesses benefiting from this system, who set the standards which govern that process; or the marketing and retailing lobby who exploit people's vulnerabilities to perpetuate those patterns of trade.

Today's political overseers try to _legitimate their authority_, against the conflict presented by their vested interests, by claiming that anything other than gradual change risks instability in the state of the nation. And, unfortunately, just like the poor food, people buy that lame message.

Question is, as ecological limits begin to bite, will their attempts to forestall change actually make matters worse?

From climate change to the standards of industrially-engineered food, the world is beginning to chaotically fall apart. Radical change or not, even their traditional hold over 'business as usual' is beginning to look

increasingly tenuous as these crises take hold.

At what point, though, will people's daily conditions become so bad that their reluctance to embrace radical change is overcome by their perceptions of future insecurity? When, to use Emma Goldman's metaphor, will they stop demanding bread and start making it themselves?

The only way to break out of that cycle is to encourage people to develop the skills to live simply, so that the economic system has less of a hold over their well-being. More importantly, the solutions are based around enabling them to learn a set of skills which gives them the freedom – irrespective of what that greater economic system does or does not do for them – to act independently to create simple systems of support and resilience with those around them.

**Irrespective of wealth or education, the one opportunity that is open to all to learn these skills of living simply is walking and camping; deliberately challenging our own 'comfort zone' by disconnecting the everyday services of the technological society and subsisting outdoors. If this can be learned in incremental stages, to the point where the ability to make shelter, comfort, good food, and community with those around you becomes habituated, what power for transformation does that give people if they enact such changes to their everyday lifestyle?**

## 4. Food Revolutions!: *"A revolution without decent food is not worth having!"*

Do you like what you eat? Does it light-up your day, and fill you with anticipation of the pleasures of each meal – and the bounty of excellent nutrition that you feel seeping into your soul every time you swallow?

Ah! I thought so!

I often ask people, if your food choices are revolting *then why aren't you?*

The title above is a twist on some popularly quoted words attributed to Emma Goldman, which she never actually said – but what she did say means much the same really, and has a very important point to make:

*"I became alive once more. At the dances I was one of the most untiring and gayest. One evening a cousin of Sasha, a young*

*boy, took me aside. With a grave face, as if he were about to announce the death of a dear comrade, he whispered to me that it did not behoove an agitator to dance. Certainly not with such reckless abandon, anyway. It was undignified for one who was on the way to become a force in the anarchist movement. My frivolity would only hurt the Cause."*

Emma Goldman, *Living My Life* (1931)

I know a lot of brilliant anarchists, a good number living properly ecological lifestyles. Not all are in rural idylls; some do so in the middle of cities. Whatever their 'thing' is though, from music making to growing food, fun is usually at the core of it.

Many of these people do not regard themselves as 'anarchists', despite ticking all the boxes; *they're just living as they wish*. But that's the point: You do not hear from these people because they off 'doing what they do'; and for that reason most people, and especially the mainstream media, do not see the example they set to the rest of the world.

The only anarchists the media likes to feature seem to be the ones who are not free, but are dangling to someone else's imposed agenda as they rail against this or that measure by throwing things.

The reason they are not free is that they are putting their efforts into battling the legitimacy of the state, by destroying the property of the state, rather than getting on and actually creating the world they want to see irrespective of state intervention.

Put more bluntly, through the traditional framing of protest the media ignore the successful anarchists making real change in their locality, because their success questions the validity of present-day political and economic authority; but love to feature the antics of the more nihilist strand of anarchists, smashing things up, because they reinforce the authoritarian stereotype of what anarchism represents.

One thing that all these people 'doing their thing' share is an immense sense of fun; just like Emma Goldman above. Having been around those other kinds of 'anarchist' at times, I rarely found that same spirit there (though the other kinds of spirits they had tended to be extremely intoxicating!).

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Or, as David Graeber put it:

*"Well the reason anarchists like direct action is because it means refusing to recognise the legitimacy of structures of power. Or even the necessity of them. Nothing annoys forces of authority more than trying to bow out of the disciplinary game entirely and saying that we could just do things on our own. Direct action is a matter of acting as if you were already free."*

White Review: *'Interview with David Graeber'* (2011)

To be alive is to have the capacity to experience joy. That you may not find this yourself is, perhaps, because you are not living in a way which creates that outcome – and perhaps you should think about changing those circumstances?

This isn't a new idea. Jung compared this to the Eastern concept of *'Living in the Tao'*, such as his retelling of the story of *The Rainmaker*; an innate sense of well-being that comes when an individual experiences a natural, rather than endured, balance in the contradictory forces in their life – and finding personal liberation in their ability to balance those competing forces on their own terms.

Many people know, if only subconsciously, that present-day modernity has no future; that the whole edifice is going to fall over at some point. What they mentally trade-off is the certainty of at least some 'certainty' in tomorrow, against the uncertainty of what will happen next year if they try to change that for themselves. That's what keeps them in the job they hate; that's why they continue to pay-off their loans; that's what keeps them buying the food that is essentially uninspiring.

In essence, to most the illusion of control is more reassuring than the distressing realisation that there is no one 'in charge'. For that reason, if there need be a revolution, the only thing that requires 'overthrowing' is the illusion of control from above. That is what prevents most people from organising their lives differently, as that belief in the illusory power of authority prevents them from changing the goals of their life.

In his 1971 collection of essays, *'Post-Scarcity Anarchism'*, Murray Bookchin outlined the contradiction of trying to create radical change in a society being transformed by material consumption – and the need to change our analysis to cope with that. Certainly the old, industrial models of the Left no longer seemed to apply:

*"Just as primitive kinship clans began to differentiate into classes, so in our own day there is a tendency for classes to decompose into entirely new subcultures which bear a resemblance to non-capitalist forms of relationships. These are not strictly economic groups any more; in fact, they reflect the tendency of the social development to transcend the economic categories of scarcity society. They constitute, in effect, a crude, ambiguous cultural preformation of the movement of scarcity into post-scarcity society."*

From the essay, *'Listen Marxist'* (1969)

The power of the present-day, affluent, technological state is that it has been able to promise – even to those who are only tenuously a part of it – that tomorrow would certainly be as good if not better than today.

We can question that premise at a number of levels now: From the falling life expectancy that has been the result of post 2008 crash Tory austerity; to the recent refutation of the basis of trickle down economics and neoliberal economic theory; to the increasing gap in wealth and lifestyle expectations between the old and young which stems of the failure of neoliberal economics; to the potential chaos of surveillance and structural unemployment as artificial intelligence and automation take-away large quantities of 'ordinary' jobs.

Just as Bookchin saw the tide going in one direction fifty years ago, today we can equally make the case for *'pre-scarcity anarchism'* – a position whereby we look at present-day ecological trends, project how they will affect our lives in the near future, and begin to organise for the imminent crash of the material trends that have dominated the Western world for the past Century or so.

We have to make the case for radical change by calling-out the threadbare promises of materialist economics; and the absurd propositions that one big solution or another might circumvent the ecological limits which have destabilised that economic process *(be they of the political Right, or the Left)*; but in doing so we have to recognise that the basis of any change begins in the certainty of food

and shelter – not in lofty ideals of political representation or the promise of technologically-enabled material consumption.

We have to plan for ecological catastrophe, quite simply because the system today is incapable of undertaking the radical change necessary to avoid that outcome. At the same time though, we have to respect that the material affluence of the last six to eight decades in just a small part of the globe were an aberration – and seek to create a lifestyle beyond those measures of 'progress', so that we can restore an ecological balance within human society's view of themselves.

**That transformation begins with the ability to make food, and create shelter, with the minimum of external resources and support. Not simply to return to a 'primitive' existence, because that could not support today's larger human population; but to re-imagine what measure of primitive simplicity might be enacted by cannibalising the infrastructure and knowledge of industrial society, in ways that give people the certainty they crave for their life tomorrow, and make space for other species to inhabit the world alongside us.**

### Where we go next?

There is no fixed plan as to what this blog will cover, or where it will go. As time, and the opportunity, arises, I will produce videos and written materials to document how I cook; *that's the entire premise of the blog.*

It may be that I will cook something in the kitchen; or outdoors; or I may cook the same thing in the kitchen and outdoors – to demonstrate that it is essentially learnt practical skills that enable this, not the material or economic wherewithal that's required to perform these actions.

**What I hope you find within all this are options, and the inspiration to pursue them in your own life. Not to copy me, or my method; but to adapt, manipulate and improve them to make their practise your own.**

### PS: *Similarly named cookbooks*

This additional section wasn't part of my original vision for this review, but it has been pointed out to me that some will in-

evitably ask the question – and due to their pushy, pigeon-holing nature they will demand an answer (which is why I originally intended to ignore this issue).

This is *An Anarchist's Cookbook*. I am, by nature, and my reasoned outlook on life, an anarchist; and the methods and practices involved in how I cook, and how that activity reinforces the values I hold, is an outward reflection of those principles.

The prefix *'An'* is appropriate because this is my own view, and I completely accept, and in fact hope that others will be able to produce their own unique take on 'their' approach to food and lifestyle.

Other self-professed 'anarchist' cookbooks apply practical approaches – labelled as a definite grammatical article that presupposes their objective validity – which are not covered here. In fact, those things are a distraction from what it is essential we focus upon to secure a lasting change; because the nature of their formulation drags you into the imposed, top-down agenda of 'the machine world', rather than shaping your own agenda which addresses your personal priorities in your chosen lifestyle.

As the maxim succinctly states, *'Existence Precedes Essence'*; unless we focus on the conditions which secure our survival as living beings, then the externally imposed controls of the machine-minded will always distract us – and prevent progress towards creating an independently sustainable lifestyle.

**Fact is, even the author of that other, 'definitive' cookbook spent his life trying to get it taken out of circulation – after the capitalist who exploited him used it to create profits without even a care for its content. That is not the case here. The thoughts here represent decades of practical application and personal reflection on their motivations. This 'indefinite' cookbook is exactly what it professes to be: A template for others to experiment with without limitation; not a prescription for essentially materialist, and hence metaphysically limited action.**