

Parade of Coops planned for July

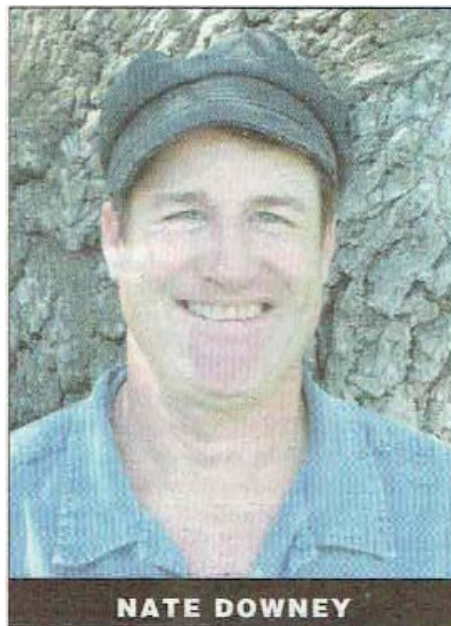
You've heard of the Parade of Homes, but you probably haven't heard of the Parade of Coops. Thanks to the nonprofit Home Grown New Mexico and the local-food magazine, *Edible Santa Fe*, our backyard will be among six gardens showcased in the Edible Kitchen Garden and Coop Tour on Sunday, July 24, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

In addition to all the squash, mint, and arugula you'd care to eat, the tour boasts five flocks of chickens, a covey of quail, several beehives, a small pond, a constructed wetlands, various aboveground and underground cisterns, greywater-recycling systems, cold frames, hoop houses, a bean tipi, food forestry, a greenhouse, and even a waterless lawn. One guy has 14 raised beds!

There's a couple with a two-story chicken coop all decked out with a skylight, canales, vigas, a flagstone patio, and a "poultry promenade." At a third garden, you'll find tobacco, water spinach, Japanese mugwort, and three species I had to cut and paste — too afraid, was I, to spell them: *Campanula rapunculus*, *molokhia*, and *shiso*.

But if this kitchen-garden tour were to have a cream-of-the-crop medal, you'd obviously have to give it to the contestants capable of producing cream. Steve and Moria Peters tend a community garden on the Santa Fe River that measures close to a quarter-acre under cultivation. At Tres Placitas del Rio, the dairy goats live in a straw-bale barn complete with chickens and a highly localized water-harvesting system. I hear they have impressive annual-veggie beds and some large swaths of edible perennials. Raspberries and asparagus up the wazoo.

Thankfully, in the midst of this 100-year drought, our family has four varieties of lettuce going, plus two kinds of kale, two chard, six chile, two bean, three or four tomato varieties, three onion, one type of sweet potato, a dozen herbs, mustard greens, carrots (purple, white, and orange), cabbage, collards, lovage, sorrel, strawberries, raspberries, rhubarb, horseradish, golden and buffalo currants, grapes, and a half-dozen reasonably dependable fruit trees — most notably, this year, a fruited pear.



Eggs are a regular home-menu item. Over easy, never-dry scrambled, cheese omelets — semi-firm. If we have time in the morning, my kids prefer soft boiled, especially when they're thoroughly mixed with ripped-up bits of supple toast (pinch of salt, hold the pepper). But lately, I've been taking egg salads to potlucks, and the reaction has been ethereal.

"What makes your eggs so... *fluffy*?" Rachel squeals with glee.

"What makes them so... *light*?" Britney ponders, half out loud.

"What makes the stuff in that bowl so *tasty*," demands Sean, "that I've gotta manipulate my own kids into going back for macaroni?"

To this I say, "It's our happy, healthy, home grown, New Mexico chickens."

"But what do you *feed* them?" they sometimes wonder, drooling.

"Local foodies feed chickens pretty much the same thing: lay pellets." I reply. "Mostly, they get trucked down from somewhere near Wyoming."

For more information about the tour or to purchase tickets (\$35), visit www.homegrownnewmexico.org.

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