HOW TO REMOVE THE OXYGEN FROM A PEAR

A ROSE SET IN JELLY SITTING ON A VERY HEAVY STUMP OF WHITE PINE

Canola oil
Dried head of a rose
1 ½ C cold water
6 packets of gelatin
2 ½ C boiling water
6" circle of 90 lb white vellum
Very heavy stump of white pine
Smooshed Square of Ceramic Sunk into a Chunk of Bread Clay (pg 16)

Pour a small amount of canola oil in the bottom of a 6" round cake pan and smear it across the entire inside surface.

I always buy roses. She receives roses for every holiday, equal parts stem and prim.

We keep them in their vase until they devour the water. The petals plump while we cook dinner, the flowers expanding as though their heaving chests prepare to expel their final living breath. I lean into their sweetness as I rise to clear the table. But a rose stops living when it is cut. Bouquets are dead before they ever exist. They deepen their color with the days, wilting alongside us and vanishing into the room. We stop seeing them. The stalks shrivel, waterlogged, into dark lines tracing the vase's interior. The dried bouquet watches us silently, invisible to the living. By the time we notice, it is impossible to guess how many days have passed. Using two fingers, pinch the stem of one rose just below the peduncle and sever it from the stem below. Gently, but with intention, place the rose just off center in the oiled pan.

Gelatin releases from cattle's hooves when they are boiled. When the liquid cools, gelatin firms, or "sets" the liquid into a solid whose plasticity is determined by the age of the hooves' original owner. The material that sets a liquid to a solid has been patented, packaged, and commodified as a cheaply available store-brand product of which you will need 6 packets.

Fill a kettle with over 2 ½ C of water and place over high heat. Fill a bowl with 1 ½ C cold water. As the kettle whistles, scatter the contents of 6 packets of gelatin across the surface of the cold water and let sit. After one minute. pour 2 ½ C of the boiling water into the bowl and begin to stir. Stir for five minutes with a spoon in your dominant hand while the other covers your nose and mouth.

Strain the gelatin into the oiled cake round. Roses float. The rose will flutter toward the edge of the dish as the gelatin fills the pan. Gingerly walk the dish to a level shelf of the refrigerator and, if it has strayed during travel, drag the rose by the stem to its final position.

Wait 24 hours.

Never select a stump that is unwieldy to move alone. The dead trees on my family's land sit in piles that dwarf the nearby barn. Sections of white pine are short, fat, and wrestle the tested limits of my strength. I wrap my arms around the stump and brace it against my chest. I rise with the strength of my legs and turn to face the trunk of my car. With the release of my arms, the tires sinks the car into the mud and the scent of a pine grove floods the retreat from Pennsylvania. Roll the stump of white pine to its place. Turned on end, its growth rings should ooze its gooey fibers, so far removed from its two by four cousins.

You made jelly. To remove the jelly from the mold, run a knife around it's edge. Using a sharp blade, cleave any section of the rose above the jelly's surface. Wedge one finger between the jelly and the mold, slowly pulling them apart. When you can reach around the jelly's corner to the bottom of the dish, invert and pry the jelly cleanly out of the mold onto a 6" circle of 90 lb white vellum.

Slide your fingers under the circle of white vellum and lift the jelly onto your palm. The vellum acts as a weak barrier between the jelly and your skin, and your palm may be damp as moisture leaches from the jelly and soaks its vellum platform. Be careful to hold a steady hand as the jelly's wiggles mark the movement of your body. Seat the jelly onto the stump so that their edges touch at a single point.

Place a Smooshed Square of Ceramic Sunk into a Chunk of Bread Clay on top of the jelly, taking care not to obscure the rose when viewed from above.

SOURDOUGH STARTER
INOCULATED USING YEAST FROM 1847

Self addressed stamped envelope
¾ C white bread flour
¾ C 90 degree F water
1 tsp sugar
1 C white bread flour
1 C 90 degree F water
1 tbsp sugar

All I know is that it started west in 1847 from Missouri.

A yeast is a single-celled fungus. It lives as the wild, invisible marker of a place, silently transmuting the bodies that travel through its home. If your body is a home then your diet is its diet. A yeast is starving for sugar and, in return, will make you carbon dioxide. Be sure to ask politely.

Send a self addressed stamped #10 envelope to:

OREGON TRAIL SOURDOUGH
POST OFFICE BOX 321
JEFFERSON, MD 21755 USA*

Check the mail every evening for 4-6 weeks. In a clear plastic baggy sits a pile of yellow granules, a dehydrated stash of American continental biome.

To inoculate your yeast, dissolve the contents of the packet in ¾ C of 90 degree F water. Add ¾ C white bread flour and 1 tsp sugar. Stir. Drape a piece of cheesecloth across the opening and secure with a rubber band.

Live alongside your starter in warmth and humidity for two days.

Add 1 C white bread flour, 1 C 90 degree F water, and 1 tbsp sugar. Place in the back of the refrigerator and do not forget about it.

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*www.carlsfriends.net

BREAD CLAY

25g recently fed Sourdough Starter Inoculated using Yeast from 1847 (pg 6)
80g flour
60g dry cone 06 clay
140g 90 degree F water
500g flour
500g dry cone 06 clay
700g 90 degree F water

Do not remove your dust mask.

Combine 25g recently fed Sourdough Starter Inoculated Using Yeast from 1847, 80g flour, 60g dry cone 06 clay, and 140g 90 degree F water. Let sit, covered, overnight.

Dry cone 06 clay absorbs water much differently than wheat flour, so never anticipate that your bread clay will look or feel like your bread. Your clay levain will have less activity than your bread levain and will likely be clay in a way that your bread levain will never be. Add remaining 500g flour, 500g dry cone 06 clay, and 700g 90 degree F water and combine. If bread clay dries out, continue to slowly add 90 degree F water until the consistency is malleable but not cracking. It may be sticky.

Cover bread clay and allow to rise in dark, humid, hot place for a day. Spritz with water if necessary.

Shape bread clay into desired rounds. Wrap the bread clay around itself. I load my kilns of bread clay with shelves between my most suspicious forms. Fire to 1828 degrees F at a relatively quick pace.

Prepare to discuss the smell of burnt toast.

Your surviving bread clay should be brittle but hold its shape. If the bread clay is too brittle, increase the amount of dry cone 06 clay in the next batch. If the bread clay is not gray on its interior, the carbon escaped. Increase temperature in more rapid succession in the next batch.

SOAP EGG GRAPES

SOAP EGG GRAPES

3 green chicken eggs
A bunch of grapes
1 C alginate
1 C cold water
Glycerin soap
Additional bare grape stem

Eat the grapes with intent. Hold a grape between two fingers and tug until you feel the skin just separate at the point of rupture. Leave the stem whole. Leave the stem bare. The pedicel reaches out in its newfound futility, grasping for the single body that it had grown to meet. Set aside four grapes: two of the largest, and two of the smallest. She eats the rest, overflowing a bowl with the small remaining bounty of oblong berries. She saves the bare stems the next few times she eats grapes, in case I may need them.

Laverne and Shirley would peck so often that they had to be moved to a separate run. Chickens can be surprisingly temperamental. The peck-ees wear chicken saddles - not for riding - but to protect their bodies from their more aggressive counterparts. Chicken saddles function more like kevlar vests than they do like saddles.

An Ameraucana wearing a chicken saddle lays green eggs. If the chickens do not live near a rooster, their egg production can be induced with their diet. The male is unnecessary for the chicken to produce. The laying season dwindles as the days get shorter. Darkness halts production. During a bright, early autumn, the Ameraucana should lay one egg per day. Check the coop every morning and collect one egg. You can be sure that it is the Ameraucana because of its signature light green palette. After three days, you should have three eggs.

Nest the eggs in a bowl next to the four grapes and the bare stem.

A plastic drinking cup makes a fine flask for an alginate mold. Alginic acid lives in the cell walls of brown algae, becoming a viscous gum when it comes into contact with water. Nontoxic and inexpensive, commercially available alginate is perfectly suited to make dental molds. Add 1 C of alginate into your plastic cup. Add 1 C of cold water into your plastic cup. Stir until no dry parts remain. Place an egg upright in the center of the mixed Alginate and gently press down. The alginate should be thin enough to slowly swallow the egg but not so thin that the egg meets the bottom of the cup. When the alginate sets fully, make a vertical slice in the alginate to sever the mold into two halves. Remove the egg. Place the mold back into the cup and cut a small pour hole at the top.

Repeat with two remaining eggs.*
Repeat with four remaining grapes.**

Alginate molds leak. Be sure to pour off excess water and pat with a paper towel before using. Place a portion of grape stem into an egg mold so that the stem rests in the egg cavity and protrudes out of the mold's pour hole. Repeat with a second egg mold.

Saponification occurs when fat, lye, and water is combined to make soap. Glycerin soap is translucent and melts easily. Soap cleans itself. Stir the glycerin soap in a saucepan over low heat until all of the solids have melted into a clear liquid. Pouring through the funnel, fill the alginate molds with the hot melted soap. They will bubble and foam as the alginate leaches water into the hot soap. Rattle the sides of each cup to bust air bubbles that may be trapped inside of the mold.

Wait 24 hours.

Place a hand over the mouth of a plastic cup and upend to release the alginate mold into your palm. Slide any excess soap off the exterior of the mold and gently pry the alginate apart at the seam. Release the egg or grape. Clean the exterior of the egg or grape with a slightly damp finger. The bare grape stem should be visible through the clean exterior of the soap egg in which it was cast. Take another bare grape stem and press a soap grape onto a pedicel until the pedicel penetrates the grape just enough to hold the grape in place. Repeat with remaining three soap grapes.

Using a sharp blade, remove the bottom portion of a single soap egg so that the egg sits on a flat surface at a forty-five degree angle.

Set the bare grape stem with attached soap grapes next to the seated soap egg. Lean the soap egg grapes alongside the bare grape stem with attached soap grapes so that the protruding stem meets the bare grape stem, as though they have always grown together.

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*Eat the eggs.
**Do not eat the grapes.

SMOOSHED SQUARE OF CERAMIC
SUNK INTO A CHUNK OF BREAD CLAY

SMOOSHED SQUARE OF CERAMIC SUNK INTO A CHUNK OF BREAD CLAY

Handful of cone 6 stoneware

Bread Clay (pg 8)

Roll the cone 6 stoneware into a ½ thick sheet and score along a grid. Using two hands, tear the clay into squares along the grid, folding and warping the sheet of clay until it rips at the seams.Press a pointer finger directly into the center of each torn piece of clay, smooshing the clay so that the corners reach up around your fingertip..

Repeat a two to three hundred times. Lay smooshes in single layers on kiln shelves and fire to 2232 degrees F.

Tear a chunk of raw bread clay and, with your pointer finger nestling inside of its own clay fingerprint, smoosh the fired smoosh into the chunk of bread clay so that the bread clay reaches up around the smooshed square. Place in a kiln and fire to 1828 degrees F.

BOX ELDER TROUGH FILLED WITH OVERPROOFING DOUGH

Boards of Box Elder
Bee's wax
Cone 6 stoneware
25g recently fed Sourdough Starter Inoculated Using Yeast from 1847 (pg 6)
140g flour
140g 90 degree F water
1000g flour
700g 90 degree F water

Box Elder Maple is most commonly known in Canada as Manitoba maple or elf maple. In Britain and Ireland it is also known as ashleaf maple. In the United States it is also called ash-leaved maple and maple ash. I was taught that it is Box Elder.

Box Elder is much softer than other stronger, straighter-grained varieties of maple. It can be used for syrup production, but it more often is not. It can be used in furniture production, but it more often is not. Box Elder trees bleed upon injury, with phenols dying the wood orange, pink, and vibrant red. The coloration traces the trees interior, saturating the heartwood and traveling along the shoots and branches. Fungi creates spalting, sketching graphic black lines that cross and counter the grain of the tree.

Boards of Box Elder suffer for their beauty. The purple sapwood swirls into the pale yellow figuring darted with blood stain. It is these colors and patterns that make the wood week and unreliable in large-scale production. To build with Box Elder, I look for the tree. Often the tree mimics Shagbark Hickory, rough and gnarled, difficult to guess without peering at its cross-section. I only pick through piles dead trees, rolling whole trunks from the top of great piles to search through what may be lying underneath. Parts of Pennsylvania are still littered with native forest. I only cut logs into lengths that I can manage with my own body and tools. I only cut logs into boards if they can lay steady for single passes through a re-saw bandsaw. I only run the boards through a planer when they have dried completely. Take two boards of Box Elder at least 24" long by 10" wide of any thickness. Cut a slot in one board at a 25 degree angle from the long edge. The slot's thickness is equal to the thickness of the second board. Slide the second board into the slot in the first board and glue in place. Cut a piece from a third board and attach flush as a third side of the trough.

Allow glue to cure 24 hours.

Roll the Cone 6 stoneware until a small ball about the size of one soap grape. Place the unfired clay ball onto a hard surface and press the pad of your right pointer finger into the center, the clay giving beneath the pressure and cracking slightly at the edges of this newly formed dish. Make a few. Fire to 2232 degrees F.

Beeswax is a food safe, water repellent finish to any wood. Sand the trough with 150 grit sandpaper, followed by 220 grit sandpaper, followed by 320 grit sandpaper, followed by 400 grit sandpaper. Soak with water. Allow trough to dry completely.

Sand the trough with 400 grit sandpaper, followed by 600 grit sandpaper. Coat the trough in food safe, water repellent bee's wax, and buff to a shine.

A sourdough starter will produce a clear layer of alcohol while it rests in the refrigerator. The sour smell of ferment clouds the room when I stir the starter, ritually keeping it fed. Flour, potato starch, water, potato water, and sugar all serve to sustain the yeast happily living inside of the sourdough starter. Combine 25g recently fed Sourdough Starter Inoculated Using Yeast from 1847, 140g flour, and 140g 80 degree water. Let sit, covered, on counter, overnight.

You made a leaven. Also known as a leavain, also known as a poolish, also known as a biga. Combine with remaining water until the leaven dissolves completely. Add remaining flour and mix with your hands until you no longer feel dry parts. Dump the dough into the trough. Take three of the ceramic dishes made with a single fingerprint and press them into the top of the loose dough. Cover the trough and allow to rise in a dark, warm, humid place.

Allow to dough to continue to proof until the dough expands and a skin forms. The air smells sour as fermentation converts sugars to gases. The wild yeast transmutes matter with or without you. Eventually it will reach its peak and begin to fall, hardening into a solid mass the shape of the interior of the trough. It continues to smell.

GRAPHITE CABBAGE HANGING BESIDE A SLICE OF BOX ELDER

48" wide roll of White Vellum
Twine
Thumb tacks and rare earth magnets
Charcoal
B graphite pencil
Log of Box Elder

Attach the end of the roll of white vellum to the highest point of a wall reachable by safely standing on a ladder. Strong thumb tacks should hold it in place, but over time my papered walls sag and tear at their points of contact, so I employ rare earth magnets to avoid the puncture and permanence of tacks. Running a flat hand down the wall, press the paper flush to the seam where the wall meets the floor and make a clean cut along this edge. Fasten with tacks or magnets.

Drill a screw into the tabletop. Tighten the chuck of a cordless drill around the straight end of an eye hook. Set the drill on the opposite side of the room from the screw. Tie one end of the twine to the screw, and walking carefully in a straight line, cross the room to loop the twine inside of the eye hook. Walk back and loop the twine around the screw. Walk back and loop the twine inside of the eye hook. The twine should always stay straight and taught. When you reach the end of the string, simply hang it inside of the room sized twine loop. Pull the drill taught and pull the trigger at full speed, watching the twine spin around itself as you adjust your body to maintain tension in tandem with the twine. Quickly it will be impossible to spin further without the rope coiling upon itself. Tie the ends of the rope and remove them from the screw and the eyelet. The rope will hang on the vellum covered wall.

Cabbage is a Brassica oleracea, like broccoli, cauliflower, kale, Brussels sprouts, collard greens, savoy, kohlrabi, and gai lan. We planted cauliflower in the fall, thinking it would mature just after a frost or two. In a manner of weeks we watched the white head peak out from behind its large green leaves. Brassicas love the cold. The plants huddle themselves together to insulate their bodies. What our cauliflower did not survive

was the beating sun of the 2017 Southern January. Our stalks shot out from its core, reaching for the sun like the flexed fingers of a grasping hand when it should be receding inward like a clenched fist. Though never commercially available, the A cabbage will unfurl in the heat, but we like it cold, wrapping its leaves tightly around itself.

On the vellum beside the rope that you made, use the charcoal to draw the rope that you made. Stay consistent in thickness and taughtness, the rope pulling towards the ground as you render every twist. Reaching the end of the rope, trade the charcoal for a B graphite pencil and draw a whole head of green cabbage grown during a perfectly frigid fall season. Wash your dominant hand frequently.

Using a 1" re-saw bandsaw, slice an edge off of a log of Box Elder so that the face grain curves around empty pockets of receding burl. Sand using 150 grit sandpaper. Sand using 220 grit sandpaper. Sand using 320 grit sandpaper. Sand using 400 grit sandpaper. Soak in water and allow to dry completely. Sand using 400 grit sandpaper. Wipe on tung oil and wipe off. Wet sand using tung oil and 400 grit sandpaper. Wet sand using tung oil and 600 grit sandpaper. Coat with bee's wax and buff to a sheen using lamb's wool. Identify the portion of the slice with the most consistent swirling figure.

Hanging is a method of preservation. Tie the slice of Box Elder to the end of the rope so that the swirling figure in the slice of Box Elder hangs directly next to the graphite cabbage, nearly touching.