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The following pieces are in answer to the prompt: “Early morning routines, early morning memories — how do you manage the first moments of your day?”

Yoga and Oatmeal

by Vida Castro

I live and work at the PVF farm in Purcellville now, so I’ve experienced a few changes in my morning routine since living in DC two months ago, while also commuting to the farm in Vienna. Both the nature of my new living space, and the transition from spring to summer farm work influenced these changes.

While I still eat oatmeal in the morning, I no longer eat it in a cup, while driving on the road for an hour. I used to take a yoga class at 6:30am in DC, and now I have to be solely self-motivated to wake up early enough and my own practice. In order to avoid working during the hottest times of the day, summer farm work starts at 6/7:30am as opposed to 9am. So now I (try to!) wake up earlier than I used to when I was commuting an hour into Vienna.

When I first moved to my pod, we had cold mornings, so I definitely felt the effect of living



Lots of singing and talking during the garlic harvest – we move as a group, pulling, cleaning, chatting, bundling. Farming takes stamina, socially and physically.

in a less temperature regulated environment. I should have bundled up more those mornings cause I would wake up too early from the cold. I would also wake up too early from the birds, but I got over that quickly. Light streaming from my windows is what really gets me to wake up, so I’ve learned to wear an eye mask before going to bed.

Regardless of the season I wear sunblock cause there is that hole in the ozone, and I know I’m going to be out there for a while. Wearing sleeveless shirts can be nice in the

summer, until you start to feel the forearms and shoulders baking. Long sleeves are also a good way to use less sunblock, save some money, prevent skin cancer! So I usually like to wear short sleeves in the cooler months and long sleeves in the sunnier ones.

Living and working on a farm has made me aware of local fauna, the weather and my own personal wellness. It’s affected my everyday life, in more ways than in my morning routine. For me, it’s one of the benefits of working at a CSA farm!

Supported by My Routines

by Amy Page

I lead a life of routine. I wake up and begin my day at approximately 6:30am. I brush my teeth and dress in work clothes (one of three pairs of sage green worn capris) and an old tshirt. I almost always have a chapstick in my front left pocket, my Leatherman utility tool in my back left pocket, and my cellphone in my front right pocket. Every morning I have the same thing for breakfast: a cup of Irish breakfast tea with a splash of milk and a medium size bowl of oatmeal with a bit of pure maple syrup stirred through. Before I leave the house, I grab my black bag that usually holds: my water bottle, gloves, and a few harvest knives. I leave the stone house at least 7 minutes before I need to be at work.



The days are long, and we save the sitting down jobs for the heat of the afternoon. Misty and Amy behead beets and tell stories at the end of the day.

Early Rising, Always

by Hana Newcomb

When I was 12, we got a milk cow. That changed everything about the morning. Before school every single day, she needed to be milked. This meant going out to the shed in the dark with one of my siblings, getting the cow out of the stall and washing off her grubby udder with warm soapy water, each of us sitting on a low stool, one on either side of the cow, our heads tucked down low so she couldn't swat us with her tail. Real farmers don't milk two to a cow, but we did. Then we had to clean out her stall, strain the milk and wash the bucket. All before going to school.

When I was 16 I started to be one of the regular corn pickers. We were in the cornfield as soon as it was light enough to see, and in August that's about 6 AM. But the cornfield was often in Loudoun 45 minutes away from my bed. We woke up early enough to make some peanut butter sandwiches and then hop into the truck for the long ride to the field. We wore turtlenecks and blue jeans, usually, to protect our faces and arms from the slicing leaves of the corn plants. Sometimes we wore bandanas up to our eyes, if there was no dew.

When I had babies in my late 20's, the day started very early. By dawn every day, the youngest person in the house was awake and ready to be with others.

By the time we got to the farm, it seemed like we had already had a half day of activity.

Now we are empty nesters and we have every choice in the world, as long as I am at morning meeting by 7:30. About four mornings a week, I slide into the pool at the Springhill Rec Center at 6:30 so I can get my knees warmed up for the day. I mingle with other elderly people as we enjoy our moment of buoyancy. On the other mornings, I get up a half an hour before it is time to go outside and pick flowers or load trucks. That's when I tackle my inbox and drink my hot chocolate/coffee (colloquially called a "hot yucky"). Like my father before me, I am not hungry for breakfast until I have worked for a few hours. And like him, I have the luxury of coming back inside in the middle of the morning for a bowl of granola or a fried egg sandwich.

Before the age of cell phones, all I needed was my watch and my knife as I headed out to work. Now that I keep track of other people, I need my phone, my clipboard, my knife and clippers and my golf cart. There is nothing more glorious than going to work by golf cart. I used to come to work the regular way, in a car in traffic, and that is far inferior to having the wind in my face as I swoop down the hill, bumping down the gravel road to arrive at the stand where Carrie is drinking her coffee and hanging out with the early birds.

Morning Routines

by Ciara Prencipe

When I was in high school, I realized I only needed 20 minutes between getting out of bed and getting out the door. Every day, no matter what, it would be 20 minutes. As you can imagine, I did the absolute bare minimum in the morning; no breakfast, no shower, no coffee! Just up and out the door. For a long time, I adhered to that 20 minutes time frame, but recently that pattern has changed, thankfully for the better.

Nowadays I set an alarm for an hour before I have to leave, and I only snooze once (or twice)! The very first thing I do after my alarm goes off is check the weather and re-read Hana's blog to remind myself of the day's work goals. Usually I'll have checked both

the night before, but you know, sometimes things change. The weather and the tasks we do each day determine what I wear, or how many changes of clothes I need to bring (if it's a rainy day or we're doing a lot of washing, I need extras). Then I get up, brush my teeth, get dressed, and let my dog out. After that I make some coffee and breakfast, usually yogurt with berries or a protein bar, or if I'm really hungry a bagel, or TWO protein bars. The hardest part of my morning is carrying my keys, bag, phone, lunch, coffee, breakfast, and water bottle to the car, a process which sometimes requires two trips. Once I'm on the road, I've got a 30-45 minute commute to eat my breakfast, listen to podcasts (my favorite is Farming Today by BBC), and mentally prepare for the day.



In the early morning before the greenhouse turns into an oven, Ciara processes garlic.

Whimsy and Grits

by Misty Schepetin



Picking beans: the one job that is always done sitting down. You move so slowly that it would make no sense to try to bend over to pick. We never pick beans in the early morning because the dew can spread disease, so it is generally hot and sticky, even sitting down.

In the kitchen while preparing breakfast we tell one another our whimsical dreams. We sing nonsensical improvised songs and continue conversations from the night before or just begin anew. We make plans to contra dance, have a picnic or to go to a swimming hole when the work day is done. Sometimes we listen to the news on NPR or coax someone into reading aloud. But the time passes too swiftly. We savor our last spoonfuls of yogurt, grits, granola or oatmeal. In a hurried manner we trot out of the door in our heavy rubber boots, mud-caked sandals or bare and callous-footed. Some farmers prefer swishy, polyester pants, some like durable, protective blue jeans, while others wear athletic or comfortable corduroy shorts. Our upper-halves are generally covered in well-worn faded tee shirts, bathing-suit tops or sports bras that desperately need to be washed. If it's a mulching day, the half dozen of us look pretty menacing with our bandanas around our necks and pocket knives at our hips. At 7:30 we gather in the green barn where we sit around the wooden table to discuss what needs to be done and to divvy up chores. When the morning meeting comes to an end, we all fill our plastic or glass vessels with well water and set out into the field with our tools, ever-growing idealism and a feeling of camaraderie.

A Memory of Mornings

by Michael Lipsky

Depending on the time of year, when I'm scheduled to work at a market that opens early, I may leave the house in the dark. Walking down to the farm stand where we load the trucks, I may still see stars, or the remnant of a waning moon. Walking down the driveway on these mornings I'm reminded of a summer 60 years ago when two of us navigated across Long Island's Great South Bay to bring to Fire Island the newspaper we had published that night.

The Fire Island Weekly was produced for residents of and visitors to eight or so summer communities. As intended by its sponsors, it was produced by teenagers. I was 17, as was Jay, the business manager. At the beginning of the week I wrote and edited articles written by still younger staff, and sent copy to the printer on the mainland. On Thursday

mornings we would run Jay's motor boat to the mainland, and then drive to the printing plant in the center of Long Island. At the printer's we continued to write and edit copy, and proofread the articles we had written. In the evening, after the printer had finished producing the Village Voice (the year-old upstart New York City weekly), it would be our turn on the press.

Sometime in the early morning hours we would pack the bundles of just-off-the-press newspapers into Jay's

car, drive back to the dock, and set off across the bay in the dark.

Once in open water, we could tell where the Long Island shore was, and we could see the Fire Island Lighthouse, giving us a second reference point. But we couldn't go in a straight line. We had to stay in the channel to avoid the shallows, and at a certain point the channel took a severe turn.

While Jay was at the controls, my job was to scan the water with a searchlight for the buoys that marked the channel. I would sit on the roof

of the cabin, high above the water, looking for the buoys' reflective markings. The wind would be in my face, bringing in the smells of the bay. The stars would be vivid in a clear sky. There would be comforting lights on the horizon, and the sounds of the boat's engine and the water giving way.

As we approached the boat basin Jay would cut the engine. Close to land once again, the wind would diminish. At some point the sky would begin to brighten, as it will while we are loading vegetables into the trucks, or setting out on the road to market.

The brightening sky and safe harbor signaled an end to the weekly routine of producing the newspaper. Soon we would begin again. Just as when we set out to load for early markets we are just hours away from ending the cycle of one week's work on the farm, and only a day away from beginning the cycle again.



7:30 meeting on Thursday. Michael (far right) and the rest turned down the 6 AM optional start time.

Managing Morning Averse-ness

by Sarah Waybright

I like the idea of the morning - a fresh start, a quieter time of day, so much potential for productivity ahead...but the actuality of mornings is far less appealing. If it weren't for the report time at the farm I'd happily stay in bed til long after 8! I'm a strong believer in routines, however, to help your body get the message about what is happening! So for all my fellow morning-averse folks, here are some things to consider including in a waking ritual:

- Drink 16oz of water, first thing - you can lose

up to a pound of hydration weight nightly, just by breathing!

- Tongue scraping - this helps to freshen up your mouth! Buy a scraper and look it up :)

- Splash your face with cold water, to cleanse skin and tighten pores

- Move in the 6 directions of the spine for a minute or two: forward, backward, side to side, and twisting left to right and back

All of this takes less than 5 minutes, so more leisurely inclusions could be made...for those who want to wake up even earlier to do them!