

Synopsis

Spending money is the last thing anyone wants to do right now. We are in the midst of a massive cultural shift away from consumerism and toward a vibrant and very active countermovement that has been thriving on the outskirts for quite some time—do-it-yourselfers who make frugal, homemade living hip are challenging the notion that true wealth has anything to do with money. In *Making It*, Coyne and Knutzen, who are at the forefront of this movement, provide readers with all the tools they need for this radical shift in home economics. The projects range from simple to ambitious and include activities done in the home, in the garden, and out in the streets. With step-by-step instructions for a wide range of projects—from growing food in an apartment and building a ninety-nine-cent solar oven to creating safe, effective laundry soap for pennies a gallon and fishing in urban waterways—*Making It* will be the go-to source for post-consumer living activities that are fun, inexpensive, and eminently doable. Within hours of buying this book, readers will be able to start transitioning into a creative, sustainable mode of living that is not just a temporary fad but a cultural revolution.

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Customer Reviews

By any chance, have you, like me, wanted to be able to make truly useful things for years? Intended to convert to cleaning in a cheap, responsible way? But just kept finding books of recipes and tips that didn't deliver, were overly complicated, called for such a wide variety of ingredients, many obscure and expensive, that you started to doubt it'd save any money at all, even if you didn't botch a single thing? I mean, what's the point of trading out my very long domestic shopping list of items I

can find at Target with an equally long list of items that have to be gathered from the far-flung corners of the globe? This is not one of those books. This is brilliant in its simplicity. The recipes and ingredients are so elemental, the authors might be the Prometheus of Home Ec. I've had the book for five days. Not only do I not need to buy half that domestic list anymore (and I imagine that will only grow as I work my way through more projects), but I don't know what I'm going to do with the stuff -the shaving cream, the detangler, the toilet cleaner, the windex- that's already in the house because this homemade stuff is BETTER than the store bought junk. What I like best about this book might be how it's changed the feel of my whole place. There's life and processes everywhere: soap is curing, the hair rinse is steeping, seedlings are sprouting, herbs are growing. I look at things around my home and see new uses for them. I see something I typically buy and think "I could make that." There's something peacefully reassuring about this but more so it's a loud humming of anticipation, excitement, and almost manic creativity. After about 8 projects, I started thinking "There needs to be a recipe for solid perfume! I'd really love a recipe for throat lozenges! With honey! Oh, and ginger! And something to freshen the front loading washing machine so I don't have to buy those Tide packets!" Before this book, it wouldn't have even occurred to me to think that it was possible. So thank you. A few more thoughts: If you are an apartment dweller, and tired of being completely overlooked by other DIY books that assume everyone can compost and keep a few chickens, then you will especially appreciate projects 49 (Free Fertilizer from Weeds) and 61 (Worm Farming), neither of which require composting or manure. Worms will break down your apartment's kitchen prep scraps -your coffee grounds, spent tea, egg shells, carrot peels, the lettuce you forgot about in the produce drawer; they are an especially elegant solution if you happen to have a garbage disposal that regurges ground up food into your dishwasher during the rinse cycle (your landlord may insist it's because you don't clean off your plates well enough, but s/he's wrong). For apartment livestock, you might borrow from their other book *The Urban Homestead (Expanded & Revised Edition): Your Guide to Self-Sufficient Living in the Heart of the City (Process Self-reliance Series)* and consider pets with benefits, such as a rabbit or a few quail. Like chickens, rabbit manure is wonderful for plants. Unlike chickens, theirs doesn't have to be composted first but can be used as is or passed through the worms first (it's like they were designed with renters in mind; some people even attach a worm bin underneath the rabbit's hutch so the waste transfers itself). A few quail will keep you supplied in adorable eggs for your Bento box lunches. But back to this book: You may also get good use out of Project 56 (making your own seedling flats); they make a compelling case for seeds ("cheap", "disease-free", and "better variety") and I appreciate that the flats are wood (I'm squeamish about growing food in plastic). There isn't anything I've found on

container planting in here; they do discuss pots and self-watering containers in *The Urban Homestead*. At the moment, after gleaning a few tidbits from the book *Apartment Gardening* but otherwise not getting much out of it, I am using *Grow Great Grub: Organic Food from Small Spaces* to keep my newly acquired herbs alive and I love it; it covers companion planting, mulching, various DIY fertilizers, and more. If that is an aspect of *Making It* that turns out to really get you going, I so far enthusiastically recommend it (and will post an update if some disastrously bad advice emerges one day). Essentially, the book *FOR* apartment farmers still has yet to be written, but *Making It* does more than the other homesteading books presently on my shelf and adds a few more pieces to my collection of apartment solutions. Martha Stewart has a simple system for watering your plants when you're out of town involving just a bucket of water and one piece of rope per pot; the *Windowfarms Project*, which I only just saw today (May 28, 2011) in *Urban Farm* magazine, is jaw-dropping. An expanded section of more of these kinds of innovative no-yard ideas would be wonderful in a second edition of this book. For the home brewing and mead making sections, I handed the book off to my husband. He said it was as thorough as something this brief can be -the technicals are all there. To give you a specific example of what he means, Step 18 ends with "Keep the end of the hose at the bottom of the carboy to minimize splashing the beer around." That's perfectly true, but it might be helpful to know that they're not just talking about minimizing mess; splashing and sloshing will make the beer taste (in my husband's words) "like cardboard." So, if you are good about reading through a project before you begin and diligently following the instructions (like my husband), you'll have no trouble. If (like me) you usually have to be told "No, really, this is important and here's why", you may need a book or mentor that allows for that kind of expanded information. For the chicken sections, I sent a copy of the book to my father-in-law, who already keeps chickens and built his own coop. He said the guidelines are solid and the diagram on pages 264-265 is very much like his chicken coop. It is worth noting that Project 65 Build A Chicken Coop is just guidelines by which to build a chicken coop, not step by step instructions of the Tab A Slot 1 nature; for floor plans, we would suggest [BackyardChickens dot com](http://BackyardChickens.com). June 20, 2011 Update: Now that we are looking at building a chicken coop ourselves, I'm finding their guidelines extremely helpful. I can use their "what we like about ours, what we'd design differently if we had to do it over again" insightful as I look at the many 'floor plans' available online. I can weed out duds easily instead of having to learn about their flaws the hard way. July 7, 2011: A Tuff Shed fell into our laps recently, which we will be modifying into a hen house, making me further realize the wisdom behind Project 65 being advice rather than a single one-size-fits-no-one floor plan. Only 1 suggestion for the next edition: Multiple Indexes. I like the way the book is organized; arranging projects from easiest to

hardest really does let you try several things the moment you get the book and they are every bit the "gateway projects that may addict you to a more homegrown lifestyle." But after that initial introduction, an index that organizes projects by utility (Medicine & Comfort, Cleaning & Laundry, Kitchen & Entertaining, Grow It) and an index of materials and ingredients (I bought, say, coconut oil for laundry soap and it would be nice to see at a glance that I can also use coconut oil for lip balm, creams, and the shampoo bar) would be very helpful. This would also show potential book buyers exactly where these projects will save them money, direct them to the projects that might be of greatest interest to them, and show them that if they were thinking about buying, say, some beeswax for a lip balm it will have many other uses to justify the purchase. Consider getting a notebook in which to record prices (I suggest a notebook because as of July 25, 2011 the few pages I'd started with no longer keep up with the homesteading renaissance going on over here). Take soap for example. I can write down what price per ounce my body wash or bar currently costs in one column and then record the price per ounce of each ingredient (then divide by the number of ingredients to get the per ounce cost of the finished soap) in the soap recipe I'd like to try. Instantly, I can see how much money I'm saving or, if I don't quite like the margin, I can, say, look for a cheaper lye before I begin. If you want a head start on gathering supplies for projects 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 24, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40 and 42 (for projects 6 and 35, add fresh herbs; for project 25, add Borax; additionally, Borax is optional with some of the 16 recipes contained in project 24) while you wait for your copy to arrive in the mail, I would suggest the following (much of which you may already have):

INGREDIENTS

- liquid castile soap (a little will last you a while)
- baking soda (the biggest, cheapest per ounce box you can find)
- white distilled vinegar (biggest, cheapest per ounce you can find)
- beeswax (5 oz should cover deodorant, salves, creams, lip balm, and furniture polish at least, as well as a solid perfume if you're interested. Provided it isn't more expensive, get it in bead form rather than 1 oz or 1 lb bricks -it'll be easier to measure and melt.)
- lye (7 oz will make a batch of olive oil soap, a batch of shampoo bars, and a batch of laundry soap bars)
- olive oil (biggest, cheapest per ounce you can find), extra virgin olive oil (just what's already probably in your pantry should be fine), coconut oil for shampoo and laundry bars, castor oil for the shampoo bar
- rosemary, peppermint, and tea tree essential oils to start if you want to make the shampoo bar and deodorant. Otherwise, everything turns out lovely even unscented. As the essential oils are the most expensive thing (though they at least go a long ways), it's nice that they're entirely optional.
- 100 proof alcohol (for bug repellent, making medicines by tincturing herbs, and 151 proof or higher making quicker herbal infusions)
- cream of tartar & a little powdered sugar (ONLY for the mints)

EQUIPMENT

- a blender (necessary for soap making and quick herbal infusions, very convenient for skin cream)

digital scale (for soap making, though I use it for beeswax too since my beeswax is not in bead form)a stir stick, like a spare disposable chop stick or a paint stirring stick from a hardware store (necessary for soap making, convenient for balms and lotions/creams)dishwashing gloves (only for soap making)something to act as a mold, like an empty milk carton (half gallon, quart, even just a few creamer cartons; only for soap making)a little pot with which to boil water (in which, for some recipes, you can fit a pyrex measuring cup)a pyrex liquid measuring cup (soap, balms)USEFUL JUNKI've begun setting aside one or two containers of various types as I run out of things -Mrs Meyers spray bottles and one or two empty canisters that previously held Mrs Meyers counter scrub, a mint tin, a pump top spritzer bottle that used to be full of California Baby Detangler, and a few small tubs that were once The Body Shop's Body Butter, Burts' Bees Belly Balm, Badger Winter Wonder Balm -even pint-sized gelato tubs- to hold lotions and lip balm. You can also refill chapsticks and deodorant sticks.

If you are even slightly interested in becoming self-sufficient in your household you need to purchase this book. It's the best I've seen on the subject - for newbies or veterans.I happen to be a bit of a veteran in this area, for years having made my own laundry detergent, cleaning supplies, toothpaste, kombucha, gardening, canning, you name it. I've flipped through many books on this subject and have never been impressed - it's all either extremely rudimentary to the point of stupidity, or overly complicated and expensive. This book is neither: it's simple but not without explanation, inexpensive and accessible, and even projects that should be a little more difficult are explained clearly and in great detail. Nearly half of the projects I've already done variations of or do on a regular basis, yet there was still material I learned a great deal from. Soapmaking is one thing I will specifically mention.Soapmaking books tend to be focused on making "pretty" or scented or "exfoliating" or some other stupid fancy complicated things. I've wanted to make bar soap for years - just basic, simple, easy, practical. This book contains a recipe for "blender soap" - 3 ingredients and a blender. And the lye they recommend using? Common drain opener available in most hardware stores. To borrow from the extensive reviewer Auntie Claus... it is "brilliant in its simplicity." That's really an accurate description of this entire book. I already have two batches of soap curing and this information alone was worth its purchase.(I will also add that they include the "hard way" of making soap via the traditional method of lard and homemade lye from wood ash. I find this fascinating and, although something I will probably never attempt, good information to have in the event of a zombie apocalypse. You would definitely need soap).I've since bought two more copies to give away and will definitely be purchasing more for the "curious hippies" I know. It's a great introduction, and

certainly worth the \$13. Making things yourself is much cheaper, they are MUCH more effective, better for the environment, and there is a feeling of empowerment, self-sufficiency and industriousness that most people lack today because consumerism is hollow. These projects would also be fantastic (supervised) learning experiences for kids. Rather than learning that laundry detergent comes from a mysterious line of branded products on a shelf in the store, they can be taught how to make these same (and much more effective!) products while you teach them the chemistry behind the cleaning (yes, this information is discussed as well). A note on a couple ingredients: Baking soda can be purchased from Costco in a 13 lb. bag, as well as white vinegar and olive oil. Borax and washing soda I've only been able to find at certain Price Chopper stores in the detergent aisle. These type of ingredients are always cheaper purchased locally rather than on .

I bought this book about a month ago and just yesterday made the "Herbal Stick Deodorant" for my husband. He has tried a few of the store bought "natural" brands and they all gave him a rash. I'm happy to say he loves the home made herbal stick deodorant. No rash and it really works!

Nothing new here folks. I think these topics have been covered just as well or better in a slew of books that started with The Nearings "The Good Life", and maybe even earlier in Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management (circa 1861). As others have mentioned, the text design is difficult to read, but I doubt that the authors picked it. I also know after 30 years of homesteading (both urban and rural) that there are better ways to do a lot of this stuff. For one thing ladies, don't make your own menstrual pads, buy yourself the reusable Keeper or Diva Cup (search on-line for sites) and you will never have to buy a tampon again. Olive oil lamps are useless, invest in an Aladdin brand lamp for easy reading and working - it will last a lifetime with proper care. I did find there was something sweet and genuine in the goal of this book and it's actually why I gave it three stars. Each generation seems to feel the tug to go back to the "simple life", and each seems to think they are the first to invent the concept. I wish anyone interested in this topic and lifestyle have a chance to explore and experience it. I would suggest you take this book out of the library and actually buy The Encyclopedia of Country Living: An Old Fashioned Recipe Book by Carla Emery to really get back to basics.

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