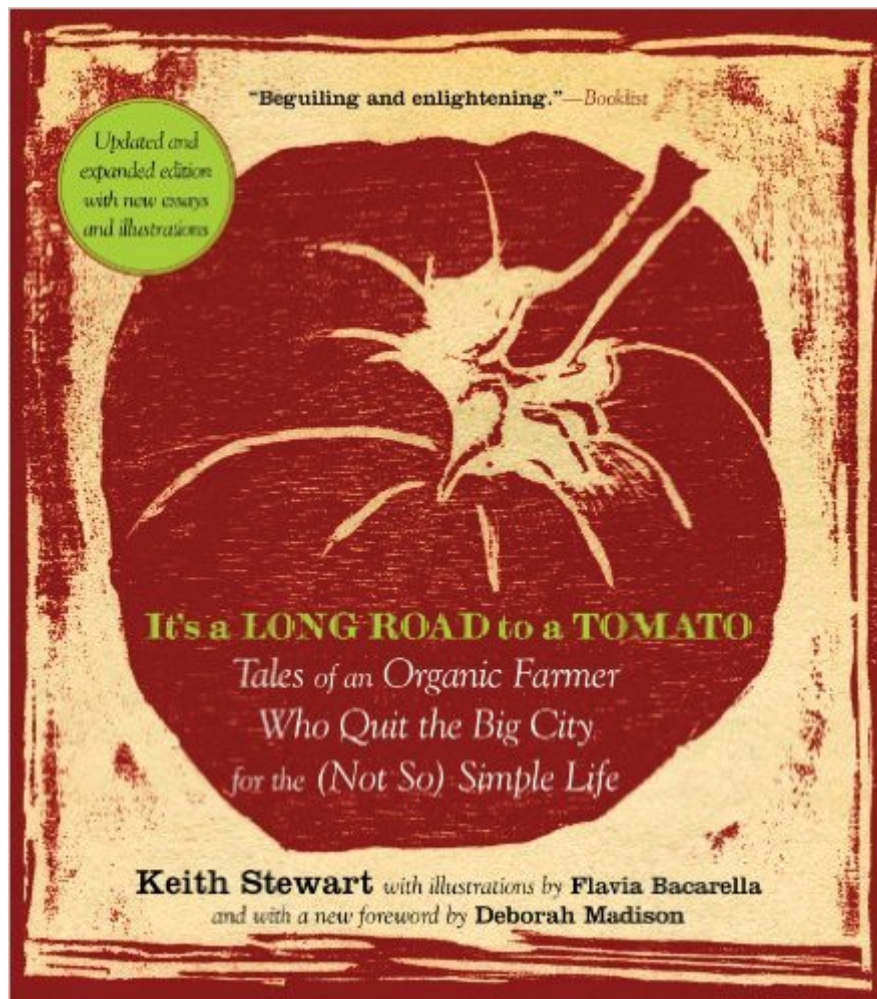


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It's A Long Road To A Tomato: Tales Of An Organic Farmer Who Quit The Big City For The (Not So) Simple Life



Synopsis

A new edition of longtime farmer Keith Stewart's deeply personal and highly acclaimed book on the hows and whys of running a small organic farm in 21st century America; updated with five new essays, a foreword by Deborah Madison, and gorgeous new woodcuts by Flavia Bacarella. Keith Stewart, already in his early forties and discontent with New York's corporate grind, moved upstate and started a one-man organic farm in 1986. Today, having surmounted the seemingly endless challenges to succeeding as an organic farmer, Keith employs seven to eight seasonal interns and provides 100 varieties of fresh produce to the shoppers and chefs who flock twice weekly, May to December, to his stand at Union Square Greenmarket in Manhattan; the only place where his produce is sold. *It's a Long Road to a Tomato* opens a window into the world of Keith's Farm, with essays on Keith's development as a farmer, the nuts and bolts of organic farming for an urban market, farm animals domestic and wild, and the political, social, and environmental issues relevant to agriculture today; and their impact on all of us.

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Customer Reviews

I was looking forward to this book and greatly enjoyed the first one hundred pages or so, even ignoring the ill-advised method of punishing his dogs for killing chickens - tying them up with dead chickens around their neck (after beating them with said dead chickens) and then leaving them there with little to eat. As any dog owner with a modicum of common sense can see, chickens are the greatest squeaky toys on earth. They make funny noises, have feathers that fly all over and

when they run away from you it is absolutely comical, not to mention the fact that they aren't nearly fast enough to actually escape. That is why the vast majority of dogs in this world would love to kill a chicken if they had the opportunity. The way to prevent this is to keep dogs away from chickens. It's as simple as that. In one of the later chapters the author seems to be very amused that his free-ranging, adult, un-neutered dog has been breeding females on his travels. Well, duh. When his neighbor is upset about this, the author disparages them. Obviously, it is funny that his dog has been impregnating females and his neighbor is taking things far too seriously. Finally taking his adult dog in to be neutered (the dog had been in his "care" for some time) they discover that he has heartworm disease. The author explains that this is a disease roaming dogs are susceptible to. Yet, he hasn't ever thought of having the dog on heart worm preventative. Indeed, his dog hasn't been to a veterinarian during his stint at the farm. Oh, he did take him to a couple of those free rabies vaccination clinics. As an aside, those clinics are intended for low-income dog owners, not lazy people who don't value veterinary services.

I first encountered Keith Stewart's writing in *The Valley Table*, the Hudson River Valley's magazine dedicated to the region's farms and foods. The essay, "A Day at the Market," detailed the amazingly intricate adventure that is selling organic vegetables at the farmer's market in New York City. What struck me about the essay was its underlying lyricism. Here the market day begins: As we pull out of the driveway, the sky is full of stars and there's a new moon to the east cradling the old moon in its arms. At first light of dawn a hazy stillness lies over the land. There's hardly a vehicle on the road as we drive by fields of freshly mowed hay and shoulder-high corn. Shapes of cows loom on the crest of a dark hill. A red fox with an impressive bushy tail and determined gait crosses the road in front of us. "Cradling the old moon in its arms": Stewart's writing is imbued with this kind of love for the land he works and the vegetables he harvests, as well as a keen understanding of the essential relation between the word and the natural world. I am reminded of Emerson's essay "Nature": "The greatest delight which the fields and woods minister is the suggestion of an occult relation between man and the vegetable..." Reading "It's a Long Road to a Tomato," which includes "A Day at the Market," I discover that selling vegetables at the stand is the end of a long process of thought, labor, and dedication. Stewart takes us to his farm in Orange County, NY and reveals to us in each essay an aspect of farm life: the value of a good knife, the economics of maintaining a small organic farm, the importance of the sustainable farming community, the dance of the swallows nesting in the barn. I especially enjoyed the essays about the animals living on the farm.

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