

## Foreword

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By Richard Heinberg

**B**y the end of the current century everyone will be pursuing a post-petroleum existence. That's not a particularly scary thought — initially, at least — in that it implies both that society will have decades in which to make the transition and that most of us who are alive today won't be around to see whether or not we like the result.

However, oil analysts who study depletion trends say that the changeover may actually be a bit more challenging — and that it may begin so soon that any complacency on our part could seriously hamper our survival prospects. Petroleum geologists and industry experts have made a cogent case that the all-time peak of global oil extraction is likely to occur within the next five years; meanwhile, a recent study (“Peaking of World Oil Production: Impacts, Mitigation and Risk Management”) commissioned by the US Department of Energy concludes that we need twenty years of crash-program preparatory work in order to avoid the “unprecedented” economic, social, and political costs that Peak Oil would otherwise entail. Some macro-social analysts (I include myself here) even believe that, unless we do prepare for Peak Oil and respond to its challenge with uncommon levels of cooperation and intelligence, it could trigger a societal collapse of the sort that brought down the ancient Romans, Mayans, and Easter Islanders.

For those who are paying attention to this emerging crisis, the message couldn't be clearer: we have no time to waste. The sooner we begin living in the post-petroleum world the easier the transition will be for us personally, and the more knowledge and skills we will have to contribute to the greater collective efforts that will be needed.

There is a profound and growing need for a Peak Oil Survival Guide. As people initially become aware of the impending global withdrawal symptoms from our addiction to non-renewable, dwindling petroleum they tend to clamor for answers to obvious questions: *How will I get around when gasoline gets really expensive? Where will my food come from when the tractors don't have fuel? How about water? Should I move to a place with better survival prospects?*

I've fielded such queries again and again during the past few years as I've crisscrossed the country talking to groups large and small about the problem of Peak Oil and its ominous implications for our lives. I have therefore contemplated writing a book somewhat like this one on many occasions, but for one reason or another have repeatedly been drawn toward other projects.

It's just as well. Albert Bates has produced a volume with more wit and judicious advice than I could possibly have done; indeed there is probably no one better suited than he to address this topic. Albert has been living a post-petroleum lifestyle since the 1970s, and, as Director of the Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm in Tennessee (a legendary intentional community exploring the frontiers of creative solutions to environmental and social problems), has taught subjects ranging from straw-bale home-building and mycoforestry to Permaculture and urban village design.

In a typical stroke of mad genius, Albert chose to make this a cookbook as well as a survival guide. There is nothing more basic to human life than eating, and Peak Oil will require some serious adjustments in how we feed ourselves. But what good is mere survival if we cannot find enjoyment as we go? Self-sufficiency and relocalization of economic activity will require creativity and humor as well as serious planning and hard work.

The cuisine described herein is not regional, because the book is intended to be universal; nevertheless, as post-petroleum agriculture necessarily becomes more localized, ingredients may become more place-specific. Albert is keenly aware of this paradox, and offers us meals that will thrill our palates wherever we're rooted. In the past-peak future, we may have vastly more time for activities such as cooking and savoring our garden-grown food — one of the silver linings of the transition ahead. Why not become a gourmet chef and turn necessity to artistry?

As Albert Bates gently informs us, Peak Oil survival will not be so much a matter of implementing new high-tech energy sources as one of getting back in touch with the rhythms of the seasons and the lay of the

land. Thus we can probably glean more relevant guidance for our future from veterans of rural areas during the Great Depression than from even the most brilliant investment analysts or exotic materials scientists.

Using quotes from sometimes-obscure but always blazingly illuminating sources, Albert sheds light on the nature of money and how Peak Oil will affect our economic lives; on how to secure a source of clean water; on dealing with wastes once the trash trucks fall silent and the flush toilets stop flushing; on heating our homes, cooking our food, and reading books at night without hastening global warming in the process.

This is clear, practical information that could save your life and those of your family and community members. It is the sort of information that desperately needs to be collected and distributed *now* — while the printing presses and delivery trucks are still up and running.

Cookbooks are handy things; that's why they sell so well. The best ones offer clear instructions and mouth-watering photos of the finished products. It is a bit of a challenge to paint the post-Peak Oil world in inviting terms, but Albert Bates has met that challenge. His cookbook is both lucid in its directions and appealing in its outcomes. Amidst all the dozens of books on Peak Oil (the ranks of which are growing by the month), this is one that is both truly original and fun read.

Here is information that's helpful to have on the home bookshelf, and that's also good to access and apply proactively *before* the obvious need arises.

Start living a post-petroleum lifestyle now and avoid the rush.

Richard Heinberg  
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*Richard Heinberg is a journalist, editor, lecturer and the author of six previous books, including The Party's Over: Oil, War and the Fate of Industrial Societies and Powerdown: Options and Actions for a Post Carbon World, and most recently, The Oil Depletion Protocol: A Plan to Avert Oil Wars, Terrorism and Economic Collapse. A member of the core faculty at New College of California School of Sustainability, and a research fellow with the Post Carbon Institute, he is widely acknowledged as one of the world's most foremost Peak Oil educators.*