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Culinary Comfort for the New Normal

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Cars in water. Boats on land. Subway scubadivers. And a turbulent trail of terror stretching from Haiti to Hoboken. Hurricane Sandy has left what is sure to be a lasting mark on millions of lives and landscapes. As a resident of the Eastern seabord, I witnessed her passage in a personal way. We have several branches down and sections of fence needing repair, but our damage is cosmetic compared with what thousands of others are facing. My sister who lives in New Jersey woke Tuesday to an apartment building surrounded by water and severed from the electrical grid. Her toddler's school was flooded, her husband's commute has been made more complicated and their otherwise gorgeous waterfront view of the Hudson River was transformed into a terryfying, frontrow seat to Sandy's destructive display. And they're the lucky ones if you consider all those who lost homes, businesses and loved ones.

Finding a silver lining in a dark cloud of historic proportions is not easy, but I do think there is one if we're ready to see our world in the post-Katrina, post-Sandy, post (insert your own global disaster here) light of day. Climate change, superstorms, extreme weather, global weirding - call the phenomenon what you will - is the new normal. We need to do everything we can can to reverse the damage we've done to nature's balance over the past 50 years, but we also need to begin making what author [James Howard Kunstler](#) [1] calls "other arrangements" to build more resilient, self-reliant communities. Gardens and gardeners will have an important role to play.



[2]

We have a lot of work ahead. I was shocked to learn a few weeks ago that [roughly 35% of America's fresh vegetables come from California's Central Valley](#) [2], an area representing under 1% of the US' land mass. The number is even more staggering for certain individual crops. For example, 85% of the US' carrot crop originates from 2 Central Valley "farms"...if you can really call something that produces over 5 million pounds of carrots a day a farm. I don't know many farmers who have a machine like the one to the right.

While it's a blessing to have such a productive resource at our disposal, it becomes a curse when we grow too dependent upon it and a wrench is somehow thrown into the works. In a year that saw \$4 gasoline and a worst-in-a-generation drought, those wrenches aren't so difficult to imagine. At the end of the day, food is a security issue. By growing what we can grow closer to home we help make our community, country and ultimately the world more secure and better able to weather future catastrophes be they natural, man-made or [zombie-induced](#) [3].



[4]Fortunately, there are countless groups and people around the

world who leading the way to this healthier, more secure future. Earlier this fall, I was in Europe and had the privilege to meet up with some of them. They include groups like [GIY Ireland](#) [5] and the [Incredible Edible Project](#) [6] of Todmorden, UK. If you have a few minutes to spare, check out these videos featuring [GIY founder Michael Kelly](#) [7] and [Incredible Edible Co-Founder Pam Warhurst](#) [4].

To offer further salve for our souls in this time of environmental upheaval, I've placed the accent this month on comfort foods. If you have a favorite comfort food recipe of your own, please upload it this month and you'll be entered to win a free one-year subscription to the KGI online garden planner. Last month's winner was KGI member Johanna Green [for her question on food preservation](#) [8]. Thanks, Johanna, for asking and contributing to the KGI site.

I hope you're weathering your storms well and making progress with your own other arrangements. Don't hesitate to let me know how KGI and I can help.

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- [1] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Howard_Kunstler
- [2] <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/14/magazine/californias-central-valley-land-of-a-billion-vegetables.html>
- [3] <http://kgi.org/images/gardening-preparation-zombie-apocalypse>
- [4] http://www.ted.com/talks/pam_warhurst_how_we_can_eat_our_landscapes.html
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