

From Seed to Table to success

Food preservation expert, author and Charlotte County resident teaches followers the power of gardening, canning and seasonal living

BY MICHELLE VALKOV
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Diane Devereaux turned a little dirt underneath her fingernails into a lot of wisdom, tracing a return to seasonal living, where wellness starts at the root — literally.

The Rotonda West resident — and internationally recognized food preservation expert who has trademarked herself as The Canning Diva, author, television presenter, instructor and mother of two — considers herself an educator at heart. For more than a decade, Devereaux has been sharing her lifelong passion for canning and food preservation, translating over 30 years of experience into practical solutions for the busy lives of families across the globe.

She recently released her latest book, “From Seed to Table: A Comprehensive Guide to Gardening, Preserving, and Cooking for Sustainable Living.”

Devereaux’s first book was self-published back in 2017, and she had the chance to go to New York to network. She had to work her butt off to get exposure, she quipped. It wasn’t until she released her fifth book that she was introduced to an agent, in the process becoming the first cookbook author he represented.

“Tom, he’s amazing,” Devereaux said. “He took a chance on me. He didn’t have to, but he did, and my advice for new authors is to not give up, and to just keep going.”

“From Seed to Table” shows readers how to grow, preserve and cook seasonal foods to save money, reduce waste, and boost flavor and nutrition. At the same time, it revives traditional skills, promotes sustainable food practices and reduces reliance on processed goods.

To support cooking and preserving, Devereaux guides readers through creating heritage food crafts, including making butter, water-glassing eggs, corning meat and fish, and much more.

“The reason I wrote the book: A lot of individuals will preserve food, but then they’re, like, ‘What do I do with it now?’ So, I was able to tie it all together in the back of the book, writing about harvesting it, preserving it, and then cooking with (it) and giving recipes, and ways to convert recipes.”

“It’s funny, ‘From Seed to Table’ is my seventh book, and I had spent a lot of time talking about canning and preserving, and so ‘Seed to Table’ was, you know, me getting pretty frustrated with our food supply, realizing that ingredients on the label aren’t really ingredients — they are chemicals.”

With a green thumb and a flair for readiness, she planted the seeds of her brand 15 years ago — drawing on her disaster management career and farm-girl



▲ In her recent book, “From Seed to Table,” Diane Devereaux offers ways to amend and enrich the soil, helping fruits and vegetables to grow. Diane Devereaux is The Canning Diva, an internationally recognized food preservation expert. ▶

roots — to grow something that could truly help people thrive.

Seasonal eating

“Disaster is relative, and it doesn’t have to be huge or man-made. It could simply be as simple as losing your job or a loved one, or getting very sick, or your neighbor breaking their leg, and they need food supplies, and you could gift them some sustenance while they recover,” Devereaux said. “I wanted it to be an opportunity to teach everyday people about the generational gap of skills that our ancestors had, or our grandparents.”

She explained that, as society has drifted away from whole foods and home gardening, she’s felt a strong passion to help restore those traditions. She believes it’s time to return to our roots — reconnecting with our homes, our food and the understanding that true health begins in the soil.

“You don’t need a farm or a 40-acre homestead,” she said. “You can do this even if you live in an apartment or a condo.”

Within her introduction in “From Seed to Table,” the author wrote,

“The movement of ‘home-steading’ has given us all hope and aspirations of a brighter, more simple future where the food is pure and working the land is therapy. But what about those of us who wish to eat and live well, to have food security and be self-reliant, but moving to the countryside is not an option? The reality is that for most of us ... to go and buy a plot of land to live off simply isn’t feasible. ... At the end of the day, though, we shouldn’t have to be a homesteader to eat healthier, to adopt a healthier lifestyle. So how do we become food secure with limited land, smaller homes, and limited financial

means? We embrace seasonal living.”

The author explains that seasonal living is aligning your lifestyle with nature’s cycles: adapting how you eat, grow and live to match the rhythms of the land.

Eating with the seasons brings a sense of rhythm and satisfaction that’s often missing in the modern diet, said Devereaux.

“Seasonal eating encourages us to embrace the natural cycles of abundance, saving foods at their peak of freshness.”

She hopes to give some valuable tools and inspiration to pursue the following 10 goals written at the end of her introductory chapter:

- Start a seasonal garden
- Preserve the harvest
- Cook from scratch
- Prioritize farmers markets and local producers
- Compost to build soil health
- Practice crop rotation and companion planting
- Raise backyard chickens or small livestock
- Forage for wild foods
- Create a food community, and
- Embrace seasonal cooking.

Devereaux also provides an entire section on pest management.

Simple changes, improved results

“The last thing you want to do is go through all of this, put all of this time and love and energy into it, and then have something eat or destroy it.”

She wrote several pages on culinary herbs as a means to get rid of pests. Basil is one such herb that also returns benefits to the soil, she explained.

“It improves the flavor of tomatoes and peppers, and acts as pest control. It



gets rid of aphids, what would be potato beetles, and tomato hornworms, and then you can use it culinary-wise.”

Another handy trick: Tuck a few bay leaves in with your stored flour — they naturally help keep pesky weevils (tiny plant-loving beetles) away.

Along with these examples, the author offers ways to amend and enrich the soil, helping vegetables and fruit grow.

Devereaux said her heart really is attached to this book.

“I couldn’t just sit here and write it and preach it, but not live it,” she said.

She also shares fun recipes she loves, such as mango vinegar and homemade vanilla.

“Once you make your own vanilla, you never buy store-bought again.”

But her perspective goes beyond recipes. She also weighs in on where modern food trends are heading.

“I don’t want to eat insects, and I feed mealworms to my chickens — I’m not eating them as pasta. Now there is lab-grown meat and 3D-printed meat. What are we talking about here? The other facet is our health suffering for it.”

Devereaux explained that, with rising health concerns, she believes many issues can be improved through simple, everyday changes in our daily food consumption.

“Just by (eating) natural, whole foods and learning how to cook and get back to our roots again ... whether it’s growing it yourself or going to a farmers market, making connections with local farmers.

“Not everybody has to grow, but with the knowledge in this book, you can ask the right questions when you are on a hunt for somebody you can trust that’s growing it for you.” ■

In the KNOW

Diane Devereaux, The Canning Diva

- **Website:** Xcanningdiva.com
- **Instagram:** @canningdiva
- **Facebook:** @canningdiva
- **X:** @canningdiva
- **YouTube:** @thecanningdiva5291
- **Pinterest:** @canningdiva
- **Book:** “From Seed to Table: A Comprehensive Guide to Gardening, Preserving, and Cooking for Sustainable Living” is available through Copperfish Books, 212 W. Virginia Ave. #112, Punta Gorda; 941-205-2560; copperfishbooks.com.



“We shouldn’t have to be a homesteader to eat healthier,” Devereaux says.



The results of Devereaux’ food preservation skills.