

[https://www.santafenewmexican.com/life/features/saved-by-sardines-rescued-by-pasta/article\\_51944b14-ab64-11ea-86a8-e79bca96893b.html](https://www.santafenewmexican.com/life/features/saved-by-sardines-rescued-by-pasta/article_51944b14-ab64-11ea-86a8-e79bca96893b.html)

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

## Saved by sardines, rescued by pasta

By Edy Keeler For The New Mexican

Jun 10, 2020



Pantry gold like this makes more time at home a joy

Photo courtesy Michael Jarmoluk/Pixabay

That headline is the title of my favorite chapter in Deborah Madison's life-saving book for me right now, *What We Eat When We Eat Alone*, widely available online. This cookbook and sweet food narrative, intended for solo eaters, has the most unique and even humorous combinations of pantry items, items shoved to the back of shelves in refrigerators and cabinets with obliterated use-by dates. A lifesaver for those observing the six-weeks-down-one-to-go-maybe phase of our state's lockdown. The quirky wonderful illustrations by Patrick McFarlin add to the experience — it is a tasty read. Even more fun than *How to Cook a Wolf* by the legendary M.F.K. Fisher.

I think my fave from the chapter is Spaghetti with Tuna and Capers. It uses breadcrumbs — stale bread is easy to come by — and olive oil, pasta, half a tin of tuna, capers, a pinch of red pepper flakes, garlic, lemon zest and juice, salt, pepper, and parsley. Since I'm hoarding the capers and part of that lemon rind for a martini, I've found that a substitution like tangy green olives, crushed or chopped, work just fine. If you cook at all, you can figure out how to put this one together. If not, email me, or order the book.

My usual column topics include how to remodel or build the best kitchen for you. But on finding I can't pen a serious remodeling article these days, I asked my editor if Let's Get Practical reactions to this trying episode would suffice. "Make the deadline and it's cool," he answered.

What can be more practical than using up your aged, drying, boring pantry stuff? It starts with emptying out those shelves and that refrigerator. And getting a lot creative. One thing I learned is that Use-By dates aren't about food safety. More about food flavor. Or course don't use food from a can that bulges. Gather your pile of oddments and head for instructive books, or mostly, for many, the internet. "What to cook with ... XYZ?" has been searched several million times since March.

It really is cool to use up stuff that you know you don't have to replace, unless you fall in love with a certain pantry palatable and must have more! I love Trader Joes, but not enough to wait in line for an hour to enter that sanctum of thrifty, rewarding shopping. Whole Foods has shorter lines since the store is large. Nattily clad mask-wearing hosts escort you to the next available check-out lane.

But I've rediscovered the big-box groceries closest to my commute, when I had one. Minimal to zero lines. The stockers there are often new hires, but they do their friendliest to direct you to what you need. And there is plenty of it, unless you are hunting down elusive paper products and sanitizing goods.

Almost as practical and somewhat rewarding: the closet clean-out. It is time for a seasonal swap-out of cold winter for chilly spring anyway.

In closing, what's not practical, but is happening anyway: Sadness at missing friends and associates. Finding Zooming is just okay. Not being able to visit a friend who had an emergency appendectomy, languishing alone in rehab. Being unable to "settle" for long enough to get absorbed in a creative endeavor. Having time to read when the library is closed. The list goes on.

And back to the brief shout-out for What We Eat When We Eat Alone. Even if we are not eating alone, we're in essence each alone with our thoughts, fears, and hopes for ourselves, for our "peeps" and families, and we hope, eventually, for the greater good. Speaking of our families, for those with children at home, this is the perfect time to help them learn to cook. Madison lays it down in a great chapter: What Every Boy and Girl Should Learn to Cook ... Before They're Men and Women. And it's not making the greatest PB&J!

This too shall pass, we are hearing, and we know it's true. What we don't know is what our new normal might be. So Let's Get Practical again, and presume that we can help make it better, kinder, more real, more fulfilling.

**Correction, June 16, 2020:**

*A previous version of this article said the Goodwill store in Santa Fe was closed. The store is open with temporary hours of 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily through July 31.*

---

Edy Keeler is the owner of Edy Keeler Interiors. She is a designer specializing in remodeling and new construction with an emphasis on kitchen and bath renovations. She is also a color and a materials consultant. Reach her at 505-577-2167 or [edyk@edykeelerinteriors.com](mailto:edyk@edykeelerinteriors.com).