



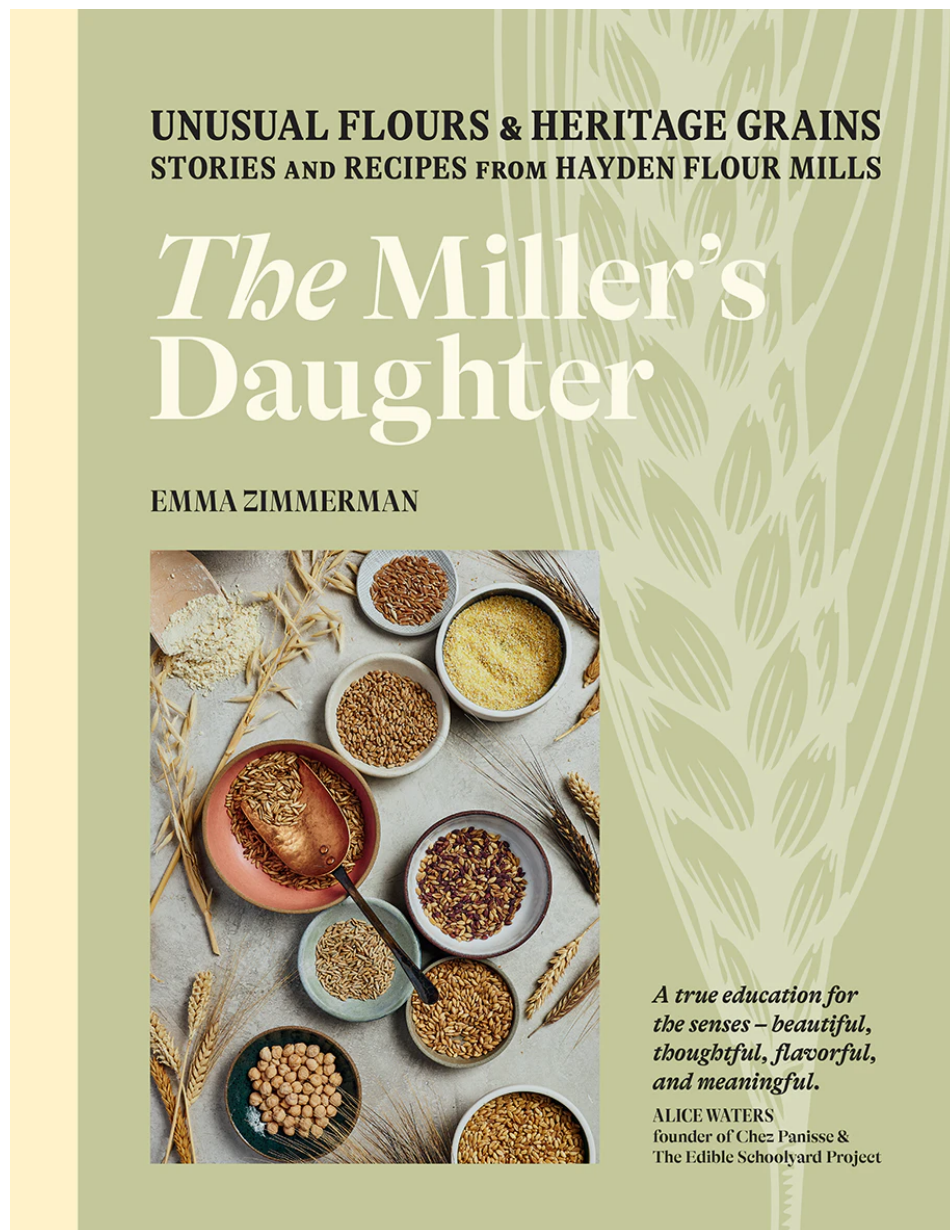
Emma Zimmerman's 'The Miller's Daughter'

A book excerpt & two recipes



Andrew Janjigian

May 18



One of my favorite things about this newsletter is getting to share excerpts and recipes from books that I love and that I think you all will love too. This time around it's Emma Zimmerman's wonderful new book, [The Miller's Daughter](#), out as of yesterday, May 17th.

Emma is—with her father, Jeff—the co-owner of Arizona's [Hayden Flour Mills](#), one of the preeminent flour and grain mills in the States today. *The Miller's Daughter* is the tale of how Jeff and Emma restored the historic mill—founded in 1864 and closed in 1998—and helped jumpstart the current grain revival. It's also a cookbook, filled with a wide variety of recipes featuring whole grains and whole-grain flours (and one bean, chickpeas). Though there are a few breads to be found within, most of the recipes are for other sorts of dishes—salads, cookies, savory snacks, and main courses.

Below you'll find the first chapter of the book, *Sow*, which is a great introduction to Emma, Hayden Flour Mills, and the pages that follow. Additionally, I have two recipes from the book to share: a [Cauliflower & Date White Sonora Berry Salad](#) and a [Chocolate Polenta Pudding Cake](#).



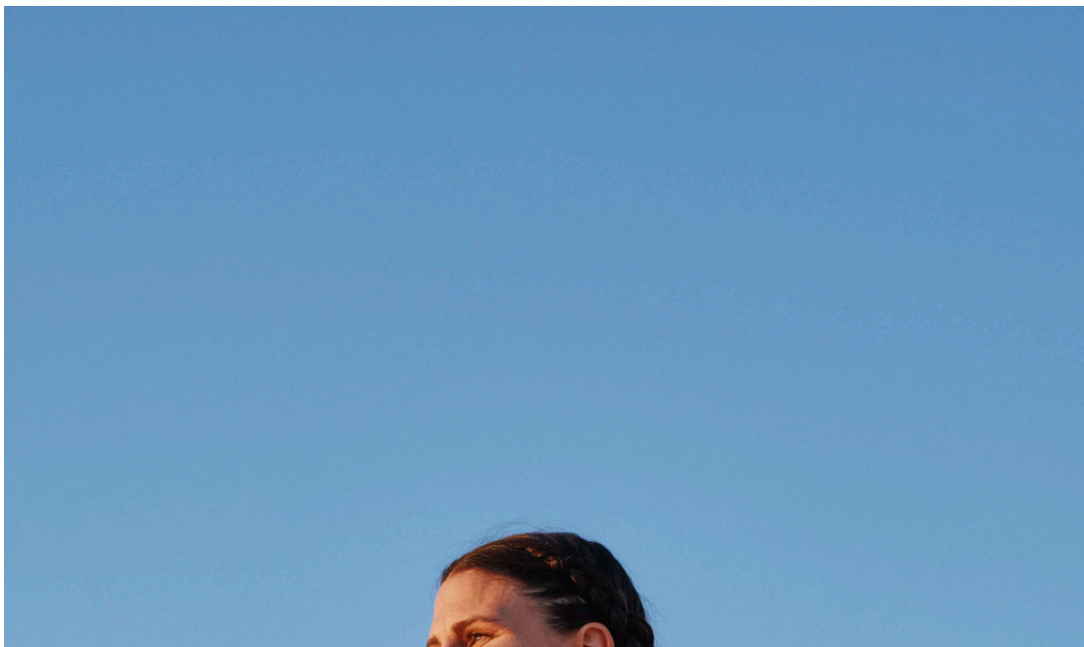
I hope you enjoy these all excerpts and get your hands on a hardcopy soon!

—Andrew

Chapter 1: SOW

*“Did our first communion with fellow humans
also place us in with the grapes,
grains, yeasts, salt and water,
so that each and every one of us were blessed
in the baking and the breaking of the bread,
in fermenting and imbibing blood-red wine
until all their molecules danced in ours?”*

—‘First Communion’ by Brother Coyote





My dad likes to claim that he arranged my marriage. He ran into my future husband at the grocery store and, recognizing him as a familiar face from my high school track meets, invited him over for dinner. This single invitation slowly morphed into a standing weekly dinner invitation from my parents to any of my or my siblings' friends. And future-husband didn't miss a week. I made a habit of ignoring him and retreated to my room after dinner to study, but he just kept hanging around. For all I knew, he was there for my parents' cooking or my prettier sister.

In those college days, lots of 'guy friends' stopped by my parents' house around dinner time. I don't blame them – old-fashioned family dinners are a dying ritual, and my parents' hospitality is legendary. My mom always built a balanced menu of color, nutrients and spice, and my dad usually added a hackneyed kitchen experiment for an element of theater and delight: a ham cooked in hay, freshly roasted coffee, jars of lacto-fermenting vegetables, a freshly butchered chicken from a farmer friend, dining with only pocket-knives to pretend we were French peasants, homemade sushi ... and there was always a loaf of homemade bread. I realized that the simple family dinner I had taken for granted my whole life was not a given for most of our peers, and they craved a seat at that table

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As much as it sometimes annoys me that my husband isn't as passionate about food as I am, his love of boxed macaroni and cheese still acts as reassurance that he wasn't coming for my parents' cooking after all. He'll be the first to confess that it was the chance to see me that kept him hanging around all those years ago.

Perhaps it was my openly cold shoulder, but my future husband decided to take a year off from college, join a Christian brotherhood in Europe and, if all went well, eventually become a monk. The day before he left I finally worked up the courage to tell him that maybe I did kind of maybe like him a little bit. But it was too late. We went our separate ways, staying in touch for the next five years with the occasional exchange of letters.

I finished my undergrad and Masters in Bioengineering in Arizona and enrolled in a PhD program in Neuroethics (a combination of bioethics and neuroscience) at McGill University in Montreal. I'd never lived anywhere but Phoenix, and Montreal was its opposite in every way. Snow to our sand, poutine to our chips and salsa – different weather, different culture, and a totally new circle of acquaintances. Up until my PhD program, I had lived either at home or close enough to home to never need to cook for myself. So, some 2500 miles from my parents' iconic culinary skills, I started to learn how to cook. I called home for recipes and techniques that I had never paid attention to before, but now found myself craving. I also had a copy of Kim Boyce's *Good to the Grain* and, because I could find all the unique flours in her recipes at the Jean Talon Market, I started baking my way through her book. Almost every Saturday I'd come home from the market with novel discoveries like fiddle leaves, rhubarb, buckwheat flour and chocolate.

Two years into my program I received a letter out of the blue from my future-husband-almost-monk. He had decided not to become a lifelong brother after all, was moving home to Arizona, and wanted to reconnect. What I read between the lines was, 'Remember when you said you liked me? Want to give things a go?' In the five years since we'd parted ways I had dated other people, but I'd inevitably hold each one up to the bar that my college crush had set so long ago and eventually break up with the poor guy who was unknowingly trying to compete. His letter was the reopened door I didn't know I was hoping for. I wrote back and said yes.

Around the same time, other factors were pushing me away from the bitter cold and unexpected struggles in Montreal and pulling me towards home – family and the desert sun

unexpected struggles in Montreal and pulling me towards home, family and the desert sun. After some hopeful long distance conversations with my renewed love interest, I finally mustered up the courage to quit my PhD program and move home to Phoenix. Although I was glad to be back at the epic family dinner table, I was also overwhelmed by a sense of failure. The only job I could find was teaching evening cadaver labs at the community college, which didn't help with my feelings of humiliation, and, on top of that, picking up a relationship after five years apart was proving to be more difficult than either of us had expected.

When I wasn't teaching, I started helping my dad with this business venture, which was really just a glorified bread-baking hobby at the time, experimenting with baking in its simplest form – flour, yeast, water, salt. This led him to discover that using freshly milled flour made a stunning difference in the final product. He bought a 25 cm(10 inch) Meadows Mill (a small tabletop mill designed for the more serious hobbyist), which took up residence in the garage. He'd mill small bags of wheat, then ride his bicycle to deliver flour samples to local chefs. A Phoenix chef, Chris Bianco, had been looking for a source of local wheat for his James Beard Award–winning pizzeria. He and my dad got to scheming and struck a deal. With almost no experience under our belts, we immediately scaled up and ordered a 81 cm (32 inch) Osttiroler stone mill from Austria.

Chris gave us a small space at one of his restaurants, rent free, to set up the mill. I'm still not entirely sure what the terms of our arrangement were, but we had just enough room for our mill and one person.

On the day the mill arrived we had to dismantle the restaurant's back door to move it into place. That was August 13, 2011, and it marked the official starting date of Hayden Flour Mills, our homage to the local milling economy generated by Charles Hayden, whose mill had defined the commerce of Tempe, Arizona, and the surrounding valley from 1874 to 1998.

Those early days were couched in a golden haze of possibility and naiveté. But in reality, we had no customers and I discovered I was allergic to flour dust, so was in a constant state of red watery eyes and sniffles. Most distressingly of all – we had nothing to mill. We needed wheat seeds and a place to plant them. And then, even if we did have a source for local grain, our flour would cost three times as much as grocery store flour. So who would even buy it?

Finding wheat seeds turned out to be one of the most unexpected challenges of this whole project. We knew that if we were going to approach milling with such a radical commitment to craft, we needed to demonstrate equal care with what we actually milled. We'd honed in on some wheat varieties that used to be grown all across the country before the industrialization of agriculture, and one name came up over and over again: a heritage variety called White Sonora.

White Sonora was the first wheat that came to North America and was grown throughout Northern Mexico, Southern Arizona and Southern California for about 400 years. It was most likely one of the varieties Charles Hayden milled at the original Hayden Flour Mills in the late 1800s, but it had fallen out of favor over the last few decades and been replaced with modern, high-yield varieties. As intrigued as we were by this variety, it seemed impossible to find in any significant quantity besides small seed packets meant for home gardeners.

That is, until we got a call from someone who could not only get us White Sonora Wheat seed, but was the whole reason the seed was still in existence. In 1983 Gary Nabhan had founded a seed bank in Southern Arizona called Native Seeds/SEARCH, which had the foresight to bank arid-adapted crops of the Southwest, many of which were in danger of extinction. The story goes that a farmer had gifted Gary a coffee can filled with the last of his White Sonora seed, long ago set aside in favor of modern varieties. It ended up stored frozen in the Native Seeds/SEARCH seed bank, patiently awaiting its resurgence.

Typically, seed banks exist to hold the genetic material of seeds for 'doomsday' scenarios, when we might need to access a genetic trait that would help make a crop more drought tolerant or stress resistant. It's more of a backup plan than nature's intended first choice, but, along with Native Seeds/SEARCH, we wanted to be part of a growing trend to repopulate our tables with these antiquated seeds.

Saving and replanting your own seeds is a little like your grandmother saving the tinfoil to reuse – it's cheap and resourceful and a little embarrassing. But as it turns out, Granny is on to something. As well as being a conscientious way to steward the earth's resources, saving our own seeds and replanting them in the same geographic area year after year causes a natural-selection process whereby the seed that succeeds is replanted and, over time, becomes naturally adapted to the climate and soil. We call these regionally adapted

...and, because naturally adapted to the climate and soil of our region, these regional varieties 'landraces', and they are extremely important ecological players.

A few years back we were asked to participate in a 'Get to know your food-maker' campaign at Whole Foods Market. I had to submit a headshot and a quote. I couldn't think of anything profound, so I spouted off something cheeky and figured I would change it later. Of course, I forgot, and a few months later I spotted my smiling face in the Whole Foods baking aisle saying, 'Unlike with animals, the best way to preserve endangered grains is to eat them!' I realize I am only compounding my embarrassment by repeating the statement here, and I'm still not sure whether my dry sense of humor translated to the wider public, but the point is simple: if we want to preserve biodiversity in our food system, we need to incorporate biodiversity at our tables. Unlike most worthwhile conservation work, it's not a hard job to eat these grains! It's probably one of the more hedonistic ways of saving our planet.

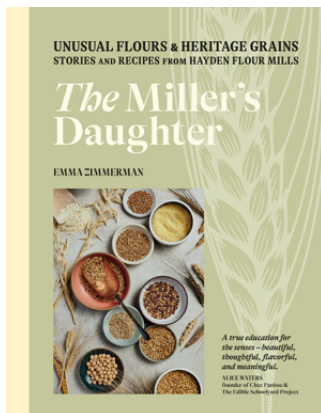
Of course this immediately begs the question: how does preserving grain diversity save the planet? And why do we need biodiversity in our food system at all? What is so bad about a monoculture? As with all living populations, genetic diversity prevents the total loss of a species through disease or disaster. Botanical variety is also essential for pollinators – another threatened category in our ecology – by creating variety in their diet as well, meeting various needs for various species and colonies of bees, along with other crucial pollinators.

One of my personal values in preserving grain diversity is that it simply prevents boredom. Our wheat consumption in the States and throughout most of the world has been reduced to only four different categories of wheat, and the average American eats about 90 kg (200 lbs) of those flours a year. That's a lot of the same old thing over and over, and sadly we're impoverishing our experience of a vast food source that has been evolving for millennia. We knew there was a world of flavor, nutrients, textures and techniques waiting on the other side of reviving these forgotten grains, and we didn't see anyone else fighting for their survival. So we decided to do it ourselves.

With the help of Native Seeds/SEARCH we procured 450 kg (1000 lbs) of White Sonora seed. An old farmer friend of my dad's, Steve Sossaman, agreed to plant 10 acres of heritage wheat for us on the outer edges of Phoenix. That winter, just a few days before Christmas, we cut open sacks of White Sonora Wheat seed, filled the seeder, and planted

our first crop. We said a blessing over the seed as it went into the field.

Later that summer, before we harvested the wheat, I walked into the field and gathered up a large bundle of this golden bounty. That bundle would become my wedding bouquet five months later, and this intoxicating wheat would define the next decade of my life.



Excerpted with permission from The Miller's Daughter by Emma Zimmerman, photos by David Alvarado, published by Hardie Grant Books, May 2022.

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Martha Souza May 18 ❤️ Liked by Andrew Janjigian

And I just ordered some Hayden Flour Mills bread flour.

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Martha Souza May 18 ❤️ Liked by Andrew Janjigian

What a wonderful, informative segment from the book. It is now on my reading list.

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