



Inside Story

Find out what inspires Unna Burch – food photographer, stylist and author of *My Garden Kitchen*.

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TAKE A LEFT off SH2, meander through a forest, swerve to avoid the odd chicken and you'll arrive at Unna Burch's Lower Hutt home. This sylvan setting makes perfect sense when you meet the food photographer, stylist and author of *My Garden Kitchen*, a cookbook based on the organic vegetables, honey and poultry from Burch's property.

"The view from every room is one of trees and native plants," says Burch. "It fits perfectly with our ethos of living off the land as much as possible." For her, that means growing veggies, keeping chooks and beehives. Future plans include building her own home and selling honey.

It all sounds very *Good Life*, and it is. Burch, her husband Aaron, and their two children moved into the rented property five years ago, following a shift from Hawke's Bay to be closer to family.

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Unna Burch in the kitchen of her Lower Hutt home, where she creates recipes for her food blog.

Above.

Unna with one of her 17 chooks. Fresh herbs, handmade ceramics and a quote that sums up Unna's infectious enthusiasm.

It was a short leap from the living-off-the-land philosophy to the Forest Cantina brand ("Forest because of where we live, and Cantina because I'm always in my kitchen") which now encompasses photography, styling and writing.

Burch's workshops, which she's been running in Auckland and Wellington since August, have been a hit with food-loving Instagrammers. In another serendipitous twist of fate, her blog recently morphed into a cookbook.

"Four months after launching the Forest Cantina blog, I was offered a publishing deal. I've always had a love of food. I come from a foodie family - my brothers are chefs and my grandmother was the best home cook ever."

Burch says she has one rule, a quote featured at the start of her cookbook: "Do everything with so much love in your heart you would never want to do it any other way." theforestcantina.com

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Unna Burch's Favourite Things

1 Bee smoker

In summer, the smell wafts through the house and is a welcome reminder that fresh honey is on its way.

2 Jars

I'm obsessed with decanting everything into jars. I always label jars with hand written brown paper labels.

3 Multi-coloured eggs

It took two-and-a-half years to get the ten different breeds that lay these coloured eggs. I now have baskets of beautiful multi-coloured eggs for my food styling.

4 My grandmother's bone-handle knives

I managed to save these before my grandfather 'gifted' them to the Salvation Army! We use them all the time and I incorporate them in my photography. They're a lovely reminder of my grandmother.

5 Leica camera

This belonged to my grandfather who captured our childhood on it and processed each image by hand. It now has pride of place in my kitchen.

6 Grandmother's diary

These journals were from my grandparents' travels and I often use them in my food styling. I love the softness that handwritten items add to a shot.

7 Cast-iron skillet

If there was a fire, then after my family and animals the one thing I would grab is this skillet.

8 Pink mugs

I'm a sucker for the colour pink. It really pops against the white ceramics and background I usually photograph on. The same goes for blue accents.

9 Cake tin and metal straws

I found this antique cake tin in a thrift shop. I adore the shape and details. The metal straws came from Moore Wilson's and I use them for cocktails or ice cream floats.

10 Wundaire ceramic collection

I now have more than a hundred pieces, which were hand-made for my cookbook by Felicity Lydia Donaldson. I love how no plate or bowl is exactly the same. ♻️



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