

## **Jill Kantor**

### **Digging Into Healthy Living in Tuxedo**

by  
Brian Campbell

Jill Kantor didn't grow up on a farm, in fact she has lived her whole life in the same five mile radius, either in River Heights or Tuxedo. However, she has found a unique way of bringing country living right into the heart of Tuxedo.

Even though her day job and her family keep her very busy, Jill's passion for healthy living led her to start her own business, the Urban Homestead. Jill says, "I officially started the Urban Homestead about a year ago, but it has been a work in progress for over two years."

It began in the spring of 2013 when Jill decided to start a garden. Then she saw an ad on the Urban Eatin' Landscapes Facebook page for a course, put on by Adrienne Percy, who runs Traditional Wisdom, Modern Kitchen. "I have always been very passionate and interested in cooking," she says, "but I really had no idea what I was getting into. In my mind I thought this would be a great way to spend a full Saturday once a month at her farm."

It turned out to be much more and Jill loved it. At the end of the six month course, Adrienne offered a program for people who wanted to become certified as a teacher and Jill signed up. She says, "We did a retreat in Gimli, learning about running the business and how to teach others."

This was the genesis of the Urban Homestead, "I'd like to get my business to a point where I'm teaching classes about traditional food preparation, but also tying in other aspects of urban homesteading." Jill says. "You don't have to live on a farm or be in a rural area to have a homestead."

Although the classes that Jill learned were mainly about food preparation, with Urban Homestead, Jill has taken the lifestyle to a new level. "Did you notice the big garden out front?" she asks jokingly.

Urban Eatin' Landscapes is, for the most part, Jill's 'go to company' (in particular, Natalie Elizabeth, who Jill considers her project manager) to help her to create her

Urban Homestead, from turning her front yard into a garden, to helping her with composting. For other needs, Jill tries to stick with local suppliers. She says, “I did get great resources through the course, but a lot of it has been my own work making contact with Manitoba based producers and farmers and sourcing things out.”

However, there are disadvantages of growing your own food, and for Jill, these include initial start-up costs and the time commitment involved in caring for your garden. “There is an initial cost, because I have outsourced help with the garden,” Jill says. “I am ok to accept that need to outsource things in my life. I recognize my limits and my time constraints.”

Jill feels that the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages and one of the biggest advantages is, “I can literally take a bowl and walk out my front door and make a salad right on the spot. There is a satisfaction in eating something that you’ve grown. The food tastes that much better.”

Going hand in hand with growing her own food, Jill learned through Traditional Wisdom, Modern Kitchen, what to do with the food she has grown. “I realized that I wasn’t going to become an expert in all of the modules that we learned,” Jill says. “So I picked the ones that resonated with me. At this time, those are Lacto Fermentation, soup broths and Kombucha.”

Jill says, “Lacto Fermentation is the oldest form of food preservation. It is likened to canning and pickling, but it is easier and much healthier for you. The process of the fermentation increases enzymes, increases probiotics, increases nutrient content while it preserves the food.”

The classes Jill teaches on food preservation are centred around Lacto Fermentation. She says, “I have different levels of classes; the basic would be Lacto Fermented salsa, sauerkraut and vegetables. The next level would be condiments, such as ketchup, hot sauce, mustard and so on.”

She also teaches a class on making Kombucha, a fermented tea drink. “It makes a really nice effervescent, bubbly tea drink that is also a very powerful probiotic,” she says. “The foundation of it all is to have a healthy way of eating.”

Jill teaches her classes in her home. She works with groups of three or four people, usually women, at least so far, who are given a list and asked to pick out three recipes that they would like to learn. Jill provides all the products, always organic, the jars and all the flavourings. She talks to them about the benefits of Lacto

Fermentation and finds out why they are interested in the course. Then they work together to create the recipes. The class takes approximately four hours and includes a light meal, and the participants leave with approximately five jars of fermented products. Jill says, “I try to create an event. I want them to come for the workshop, but I want them to feel like it is an event.”

Jill has been asked about teaching larger groups and she is looking at possibly restructuring to accommodate a few more, but she is limited by the room in her kitchen and says, “You can learn in a bigger group, but you can’t get to everybody’s questions. I like the intimacy of a smaller group.”

Jill didn’t start out intending to teach people healthy ways of eating, but then her life hasn’t necessarily followed a set pattern. For instance, even though she studied and obtained an Arts degree at the University of Manitoba, Jill’s first job out of university was in sales at Xerox and she has been in sales ever since. After leaving Xerox, she became a sales rep for a pharmaceutical company for six years.

When that job ended, she went to the David Aplin Group, primarily to obtain their services as a recruiter, but ended up being hired for their Winnipeg office. “I have been a Sales and Marketing Recruiter for 11 years,” Jill says. “I manage a recruiting desk, at the same time I am the National Field Trainer, and also the National Practice Leader. I have three jobs.”

These three jobs keep Jill very busy, not only in Winnipeg, but across Canada. The National Field Trainer position has her travelling to various branches of the David Aplin Group across Canada, training other recruiters. Jill says, “I have been to almost every branch, except for Halifax.”

But even with her busy professional life, Jill still finds time for her Urban Homestead. In fact, the message she would like to send to other busy professionals is, “It doesn’t have to be difficult. If you want to have a garden, or live a healthy lifestyle, start small and outsource what you need to, to make it happen.”

Jill considers Urban Homestead her extracurricular activity, and this is reflected in her volunteer work. One of the things she has recently been involved in was acting as the Workshop Leader Liaison for an event called the DIY Homesteader Festival, which took place on June 6 at Nourished Roots Farm in Fraserwood, MB.

Since a front yard garden is not something that you would naturally expect to see in Tuxedo, Jill has worked with Urban Eatin’ Landscapes to architecturally design

and landscape her garden to have a visual appeal, rather than looking like a farmer's field. "People say it's gorgeous," she says. "Maybe I'll start a trend."

Through it all, Jill loves living in Tuxedo, particularly the fact that everything she needs is right in her neighbourhood. "I basically live at the Tuxedo Mall. Everything I need to get done, I can do there," she says.

Jill also loves the small community feel and the uniqueness of it. She says, "There is a charm to this area."

She also likes the closeness of Assiniboine Park and Assiniboine Forest, but this provides its own challenge, since the local wildlife like to visit her garden. Jill says, "We have always seen deer and rabbits in the area. The garden didn't bring the deer here, but they certainly like the garden I have."

Jill's plans for the future involve building her business and continuing to teach the benefits of Lacto Fermentation in healthy eating and living. She says, "My target audience is like minded individuals like myself; busy professionals, busy parents or young professionals who like trying out new ways to stay healthy."

But for Jill, the Urban Homestead is much more than a business or even healthy eating. "It is about a lifestyle," she says. "The smallest changes make a difference."