

Small Town, Big World: Burn Barrel Kitchen

By Britt Benson Steele

When we lived in Bali we over-wintered, leaving the cold and rain behind, and returning to the Northwest sometime around May 1st, just in time for summer. Sounds glamorous, but there was something missing. Thanksgiving and Christmas in the tropics are a bit lackluster. Even when we tried to conjure up a holiday meal, there wasn't an oven to be found, so this meant no pumpkin pie and no baked sweet potatoes. Instead, we'd show up for a pool party somewhere and eat mango and salad and say, "Merry Christmas!" It was nice, of course, but we found ourselves discussing how we took comfort in pretending it wasn't Christmas after all, so we wouldn't miss home so much.

When we traveled the islands around Bali each island was a little different. Every kitchen set up was unique. On Bali, for example, the entire "family compound" shared one kitchen. The family compound was the patriarch, his wife, their son (or sons), and their sons' wives and children. Often there were 10-12 people in a compound, give or take a few.

Generally speaking the kitchen had a two burner gas range (you and I call these "camp stoves"), a

sink, and some open shelving. Refrigerators were very small, if at all, and were reserved for the wealthy, as electricity was expensive and intermittent. I remember it being a semi-regular occurrence for someone to come down with food poisoning because 3 meals for the day were prepared early in the morning and then left out all day. These meals usually included chicken, rice, eggs, some local vegetable greens and sambal (a spicy sauce that makes the eyes water). Given the conditions, it was no surprise the incidence of food poisoning.

Suffice it to say the US has some pretty posh kitchens. Even the "worst" kitchen I have ever had far exceeds the kitchens we witnessed in some native Indonesian homes. This photo shows the standard for "kitchens" — outdoor with no roof nor floor — that lined the walking streets off the back of the cinder block houses. You could identify a

kitchen by its one distinguishable item: a burn barrel — also known as a "stove." There was usually one pot, a couple of red clay bowls, and maybe some old rabbit wire attached to the wall behind the barrel for hanging things.

Truth of it is that I could probably stop writing here. You get the picture: Life is good here. It's the exception, not the rule, to be without a refrigerator and stove. And yet, we are conditioned to "new and shiny": cars, appliances, gadgets. My hope... is that the next time I feel the urge to update something that serves as mere aesthetics or reach for that poorly constructed but cool whatsadinger, that instead I reach for this photo of the burn barrel kitchen in



my mind, and count my lucky stars — those same stars that were painted on the "ceiling" of that little island kitchen.

Creature Comforts: Catnip

By Michal Smith

When's the last time you gave your cat catnip?

With just a couple of shakes of good grade catnip flakes, or spray, did your cat(s) go "bonkers," roll around rubbing on everything, become sweet and uncharacteristically affectionate, or did they just walk away?

Statistics show that actually only about 50% of cats seem to be affected by catnip and the behavior that results varies widely between them.

Catnip is a perennial herb in the mint family. The active ingredient that draws cats to it is nepetgualactone.

The plant itself is considered a weed by many gardeners. It has the general look of mint with long stems and bilateral leaves, but it is identifiable by its characteristic clusters of white-purple flowers on the stem ends. The alluring scent of catnip must be inhaled to affect the cat. The scent is received by the vomeronasal organ, also known as the Jacobson's organ, which is located in the back of the cat's nose. The subsequent stimulation causes the Flehman response, which is the funny face your cat makes when he curls back his lips and slightly opens his mouth. This action presses his tongue against the roof of his mouth, forcing air through the vomeronasal organ. Your

cat is actually smelling and tasting at the same time.

When a cat sniffs nepetalactone it can act as a stimulant. However, nepetalactone acts as a sedative if eaten. Cats will frequently rub against or chew on catnip to bruise the leaves and stems, which then releases more. The behavioral response is said to look like the cat is "intoxicated" or "drunken" and cats have been seen rolling around in ecstasy after having indulged in the herb.

Commonly purchased cat toys are stuffed with catnip which provide much entertainment to owners as they watch the kitty prowl around to find the best method of attacking the toy and bat-

ting it around. Catnip can be sprinkled or sprayed on a rug, cat tree, or other toys to encourage play and enjoyment. Catnip is also known to be a digestive aid and can be sprinkled on your cat's food in moderation. Creatures carries catnip flakes, sprays, kits to grow your own, as well as infused catnip toys.

Essential Oil Tip: Lavender is an effective oil to use (diluted as appropriate) when pets display allergic symptoms such as the uncontrollable itch and red skin.... Call or come by Creatures pet store to learn more 503-429-PETS Open 7 days a week! Mon-Fri 10-6; Sat 10-5; Sun noon-4.

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Pat was inducted into the VHS Sports Hall of Fame in its original class in 2014 for his accomplishments in Cross Country - 1st Team All State. Pat passed away on October 22, 2014. All proceeds from this event go to the Vernonia Education Foundation - Sports Initiative, for Cross Country and Track & Field. Additional donations can be made to: Pat Curl Memorial Fund c/o Wauna Credit Union 1010 Bridge St. Vernonia, OR 97064

Questions? PatCurlBenefit@gmail.com