

AFTER BEING DIAGNOSED WITH LYME DISEASE IN HER THIRTIES, KELSEY BARRETT looked at her diet to amplify her healing. “My illness has deeply shaped what I cook, the kind of vessels I cook in, and the ritual around how I eat.” Having restored her health, Barrett now draws on her experience—and training in organic farming and herbalism—in her private wellness practice in Berkeley, California. Her goal: “To connect the body to the local and wild landscape. Having ingredient diversity contributes to more variety of nutrients and overall

increased health.” In other words: She is not interested in a “miracle cure” but a prescription for living.

Getting in the kitchen has been the simplest act of her gut-balancing journey. “Cooking itself is one of the most grounding, relaxing, and creative activities,” says Barrett, who previously worked in fashion as a tech designer for Marc by Marc Jacobs and Everlane. “I touch, smell, and taste food while I’m cooking to prepare my digestion to receive nourishment.” During meals, she takes time to “slow down, enjoy what I’m



*“Cooking is one of the most grounding, relaxing, and creative activities. I don’t follow recipes; I flow with the energy and instinct of the moment and what wild and cultivated produce I have on hand.”*



← Food is potent medicine to herbalist and holistic health practitioner Kelsey Barrett (pictured, left), who is based in Mill Valley, California.

↑ Foraging for seasonal, wild greens, fruits, and nuts helps support and sustain the body and the natural cycle of the earth.

eating, and the company I share my food with. I’ve made it a rule to avoid difficult conversations when eating so that I stay really relaxed.”

As for what’s on her plate? A lot of fermented foods, which support the overall detoxification process. “I make burdock pickles and snack on those throughout the week. Burdock is unparalleled in its ability to nourish while also cleansing the liver,” she says. Rather than rely on exotic superfoods—often imported “at the cost of other communities and the earth”—she looks to nutrient-dense plants native to North America, including nettle seed, a so-called “weed” that Barrett says is “deeply nourishing” for adrenal fatigue and can be mixed into a raw pesto. After much research, Barrett has also given up her cast-iron and stainless-steel cooking equipment.

“Heavy metals are a huge environmental and physical burden on our health. When I found out, I switched to all ceramic.”

Her other passion, beyond the plant kingdom: “I’m a hot spring addict,” says Barrett. Her go-to spot is Steep Ravine hot springs, north of San Francisco. “The springs are only revealed during full moons with a low tide and you can sit in a cave with sea anemones and other underwater creatures.” If not there, you will find her in the fields. “I have a big Irish Catholic family, and we share a half acre family garden plot that everyone harvests from,” she says. It’s food for the body—and soul. “Cooking from our garden, mixed with sustainably foraged wild foods, increases the vitality and longevity of my family and the earth.”