

# The Amazon Trail: Home Cooking

**O**n weekends I cook. There's no time to cook during the week – staying afloat in this rich man's economy takes all the rest of my time. I'm not complaining, at least I have a job, at least I can buy food to cook.

My job happens to keep me in touch with all sorts of employers. On any given day I may speak with dozens of people in manufacturing, government, health care, tourism, education and farming; with mechanics, web designers, security guards, traffic engineers, EMTs or call center recruiters. And these days they are all singing the same song – “We're on layoff,” “We have a hiring freeze,” “We don't have enough work to keep our employees busy,” “We haven't hired in a year,” “We're expecting a budget cutback.”

The employees tell me, “This is my last day of work and I don't know what I'm going to do,” “I'm trying to do the work of five people now, and it's only going to get worse,” and, some-



need, even if it means that we have to save up for years for a first car, for the big red tool chest of butch dreams, or for our sunset years in a gay retirement village.

Being American means being privileged to one degree or another. If we're spoiled and acquisitive, so be it, that's who we are – from the immigrant expecting gold in the streets to the children of the self-made industrialist. And today, our dreams are being taken away from us by the men on top of the heap whom so many Americans trusted enough to send to Washington.

pump jockeys.

A year ago, with so many new prisons being built, people who could find nothing else went into the growth industry of corrections. Today those new corrections officers are out on the street alongside prisoners released for lack of money to keep them inside. Large corporations once promised stability, but bonus-fat CEOs find it more important to feed profits to investors than to feed employees. They too are cutting back.

And we have to eat. Personally, I think the discovery of the crockpot is the greatest thing since the wheel. They're easy to find at garage sales and they turn the most economical foods into tasty nutrition, like stew, or rice and beans.

How big a hint does Washington need that its policies are increasing hunger in America? The food banks here in the northwest are emptying or, in rural areas, closing down altogether. Does this administration care? Do they think that all the laid off workers can get jobs with Homeland Security? Not likely – that agency will be the result of shuffling 170,000 already-employed workers from 22 existing federal agencies into the Bureau of Big Brother.

Of course, now that 350,000 putatively straight soldiers and sailors have been shipped off to the midwest, fortuitously making a positive dent in the employment statistics, the young people of America shouldn't have any problem getting work with the military. Lucky kids, they can use food stamps to supplement their meager incomes and come home – whole, I hope – unequipped for any job except the road crew – which is laying off too.

It's bleak out there. But it's cozy in here with the crockpot releasing mouth-watering smells. Five or six centuries ago Henry IV is said to have declared, “I want there to be no peasant in my realm so poor that he will not have a chicken in his pot every Sunday.” Another compassionate conservative. Get a clue, George II. ▼

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**My friend may need to join the wandering tribes of highly educated Americans who are the new migrant workers, following the job market away from their established lives.**

how most heart-rending of all, “I'm still here, but all my friends were laid off last week.”

As much noise as the folks in the White House are making over war and homeland security, they can't drown out much longer the sound of heart-broken Americans made redundant. We're a proud people who feel hollow without a purpose and without the structure employment gives to our lives. Our self-worth is bound up in accomplishments and pay checks. We are accustomed to buying what we

I have a friend in Connecticut whose whole state agency may be eliminated. She provides vocational services to the disabled who will in turn lose the assistance they need to get jobs. My friend the librarian doesn't know where she'll be in six months if the budget crunch eliminates her job. She may need to join the wandering tribes of highly educated Americans who are the new migrant workers, following the job market away from their established lives – or staying home and taking jobs as

all, only six weeks away. ▼

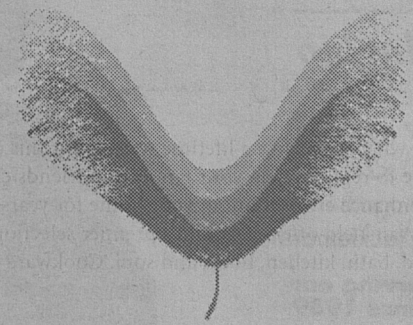
*Pippin is a radical faerie waiting for the light to return to the north facing slope that is Faerie Camp Destiny. He is also known as*

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## Groundhogs

cont'd from previous page

groundhogs as she brings us back to the light and helps us realize that the Spring Equinox is, after



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foundation of vermont

### Our Mission

The Samara Foundation of Vermont is a charitable foundation whose mission is to support and strengthen Vermont's gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered communities today and build an endowment for tomorrow.

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