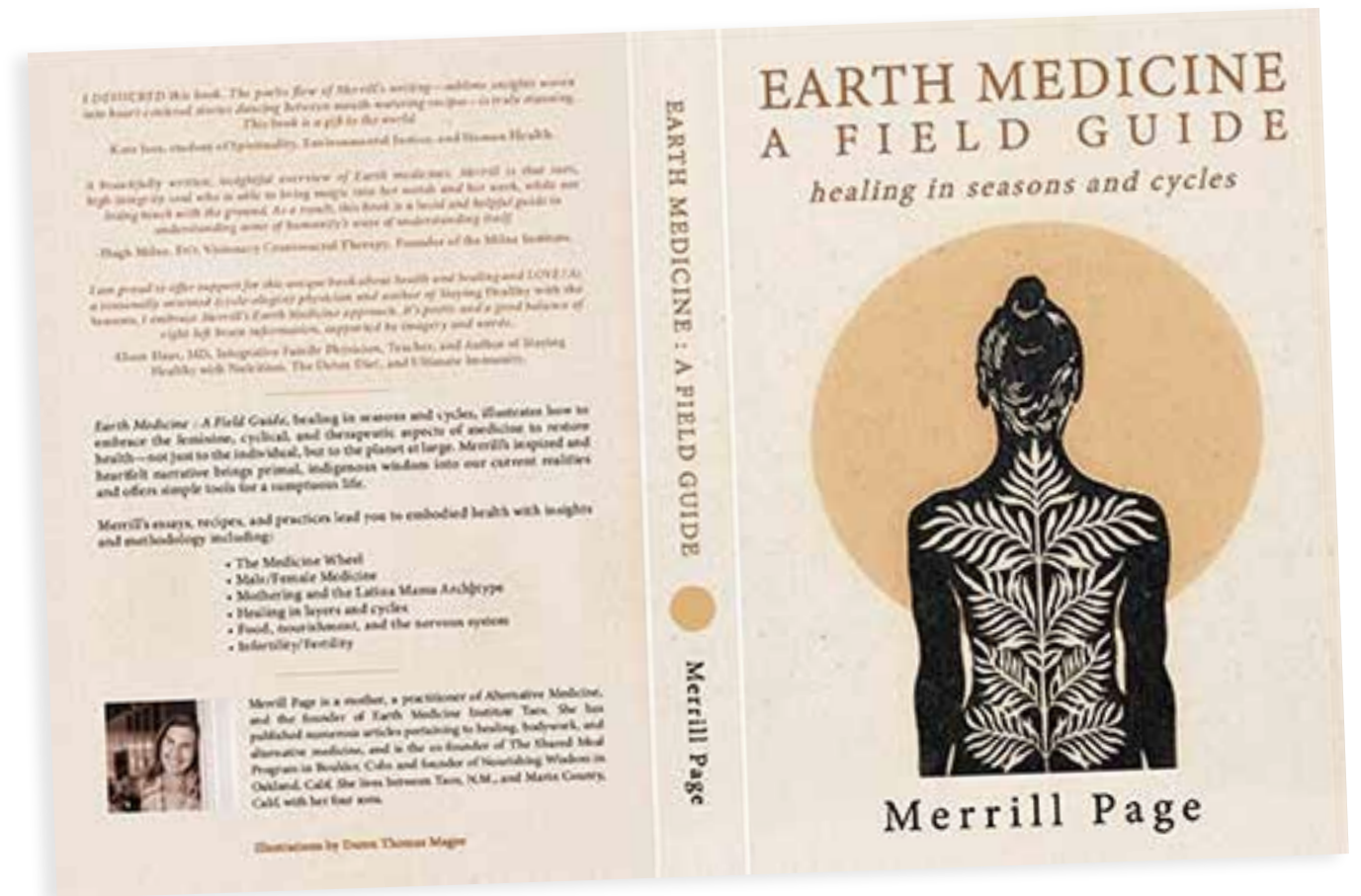




Merrill Page and her new book, *Earth Medicine: A Field Guide* (opposite page).

DOWN TO EARTH

BY ROBERT JANJIGIAN



MERRILL PAGE wanted to be a doctor. But somewhere along the way, from her home bases in Cincinnati and Washington, D.C., and later Marin County, California, and Taos, New Mexico (with stops in Spain, Palm Beach, Palo Alto, Guatemala, and Argentina along the way), she found her calling as a healer and authority in the practice of alternative medicine. Her philosophy emphasizes balance and harmony as the keys to living a healthy life. With *Earth Medicine*, her recently released guide to healing, Page suggests that alternative treatments and practices can be integrated into the everyday routines of so-called normal or conventional people who may have already embraced some of these familiar practices such as yoga or acupuncture. While she does appreciate the mystical aspects associated with Eastern or native people's cures, Page is also understanding about those who might be skeptics about nontraditional methods.

Page, who says traditional Western medicine and the medical system's failure for her personally prompted her exploration and adoption of alternative ideas. As a teenager, she battled an eating disorder, and found later that the her "cure" eventually involved addressing spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical issues. "You need to surrender to reality, to find harmony inside yourself," she explains. "You have to find out what's right for you."

A surprising and quite interesting aspect of *Earth Medicine* is the inclusion of many recipes for what Page looks upon as essential parts of a healthy life. She likes to "blur the boundary between food and medicine," believing that what we eat can improve our overall well being. Among the most important ingredients one should have in the pantry or fridge are: ginger, yogurt, elderberry syrup, masa flour, garlic, onions, olives, olive oil, and local honey. Her book in some ways is a tribute to Laura Esquivel, one of Page's heroes, whose 1989 novel, *Like Water For Chocolate*, features recipes as each chapter's opening. Page, after all, was an English and Spanish Literature major at Stanford. And did complete pre-med study at George Washington University. She's also a mother of four sons, whom she is always after about turning off lights. "Artificial lights agitate the nervous system," she states.

Early in 2022, Page will launch the Earth Medicine Institute Taos, a facility designed to educate professional practitioners of alternative medicine via courses, symposiums, and publications. It is not a treatment center. Virtual classes are expected to be offered in the late winter. ♦

For more information, visit earthmedicinetaos.org.