

With summer waning and the daylight hours becoming fewer and fewer, our work here on the farm has increasingly been concerned with food preservation. Feed for the livestock is in the barns and should be sufficient to see them safely through the winter.

Our food, though, is not all "under cover" yet. Some vegetables are still in the garden, doing their best to grow a little more before harvest time. The fall raspberries ripen a little each day, and we must pick them every day, since they often turn from ripe to unpleasantly overripe from one day to the next.

We go through the tomato plants each day, as well, since we prize them highly enough to do our best to see that we get them into the house before they have passed their peak.

Potatoes are in the root cellar now, a little early this year, but they were ripe, and the vines were dying. Leaving them longer risked missing some that had become invisible among the mulch and fall forbs.

Carrots and beets are still in their beds, but beet pickles will be on my list for this week, and I will shred some of the carrots for the lacto-fermented supply we enjoy. There are still onions to pull and cure, and we will lay them on the hay rack that the garlic will soon vacate.

This past week, the fruit cellar began to take on its winter look. Some of the shelves are still barren of food, their space taken up with empty Mason jars that will soon be filled. But, I have made progress this past week. Blueberries and applesauce share the top shelf on the west side of the fruit cellar. The dark blue of the berries contrasts attractively with the pale, glistening yellow of the applesauce. I know that it does not matter if the fruits and vegetables on the shelves are arranged to please the eye. The foods resting there will taste the same and nourish us in the same way, regardless of their placement in the fruit cellar. But, it does not cost more time or effort to try to make the foods look appealing in their relation to one another. I like looking at the full fruit cellar shelves and admiring the various colors. I also like to anticipate the great variety of meals we will enjoy this winter due to our summer efforts.

Today, the canned tomatoes and Italian style tomato sauce were

joined on their shelf by six jars of "Fiesta Salsa." There was a little leftover after filling the jars, and I stored it in the refrigerator. I did taste it first, though, and I think I will write "hot" or "spice" on the lids of the jars. Cousin Matt's jalapeno peppers I had in the freezer had plenty of heat.

I canned peaches today, too, but they are still sitting here on the woodburning cookstove (no fire!) cooling. I will label each jar lid "16" in case we have any left next summer. I don't like getting "old" and "new" jars of fruit or vegetables mixed up. And, we try to use up each year's production during the following winter. If we have too much, it usually ends up as livestock feed, especially if we have pigs.

Tomorrow I will can more applesauce. Runo came in from setting up the portable electric netting where the sheep will pasture this next week, and he had a big apple with him. We cut it open, and it was pest free and ripening nicely. It tasted good, too, so that seedling tree will provide a few more jars of sauce and perhaps, a pie or two.

This year, for the first time, we also raised some wheat that we can use for bread. The Red Fife and the Warthog varieties will be welcome additions to the homegrown foods on our winter plates.

I like harvest time. It feels like worthy labor to fill the freezers, the fruit shelves, and the root cellar. When it is all stored away, we take a good look, knowing that barring any catastrophe, we will have sustenance for another winter.