

Cooking, when one is using ingredients that come from the home place, is always a "seat of the pants" endeavor. What we have available changes from month to month, week to week, and even day to day. Right now, though, we are in a transitional period. Summer's offerings are about gone, but we haven't come to the winter-only stores in the fruit cellar, root cellar, and freezers. There is still a little of summer's bounty here and there in the garden and unheated greenhouses, and we are beginning to dip into the winter supply, as well.

There are still a few tomatoes left in the greenhouses, but they don't have the flavor or texture of those earlier in the season. I still find a pepper here and there, and I know there are two eggplants waiting in their bed. Outside, there are plentiful leeks that haven't been harvested for storage yet, and the beets are still in the ground. The kale is frilly and healthy, and it appears in some form or another in many of our meals.

Our tastes change too, it seems. Nothing is quite as appealing right now as baked squash with butter and maple syrup. The mashed potatoes are enlivened with garlic that has been roasted, and soups of various combinations of these fall crops are often on our table.

This morning, however, I am baking cinnamon rolls. These, though, will have a subtle flavor of maple and pumpkin. I tried this last week with no recipe--just a feeling that it would be a good combination. So, this morning I added a cupful of pumpkin purée to the dough, and maple will flavor the filling of brown sugar, raisins, cinnamon, and cardamom. A little maple syrup in the glaze will add additional taste.

I think our desire for certain foods corresponds with the seasons, too. The soups and slow-cooked meals of autumn wouldn't be nearly as appealing in July and August, when our eyes light up at the sight of beautiful salads and fruits.

We don't eat many desserts this time of year. We are much more likely to have a cinnamon roll or muffin with our mid-morning coffee. A little later on, though, when all the summer fruits and fresh vegetables are only a memory, our dinnertime meals will usually end with a dish of canned or frozen fruit and a cookie.

I like to cook and bake at any time of year, but the fall seems especially designed for working in the kitchen. It isn't cold enough for a furnace fire, but a cookstove blaze and the electric oven working make the cabin cozy on the raw, rainy days of October and November. And, too, the summer work load has diminished, leaving a little more time for working in the house. So, this morning, I mixed and kneaded the dough for the pumpkin-cinnamon rolls and then sat down at the loom to weave the linen/cotton fabric that has not had my attention for many months. As I work, my thoughts move from food to winter projects and back to food. Meanwhile, the dough has risen.