

I made a lemon meringue pie a week or so ago. It had cooled and was on the kitchen cupboard when an acquaintance dropped by, someone I don't see often, but who is one of the friendly faces among the people we know. I invited her to come in and have a cup of coffee and a piece of lemon pie. She accepted, and I made coffee and cut pieces of pie and put them on small plates.

She exclaimed in surprise, "Do you put food coloring or something in your lemon pie? It is so bright yellow!"

"No," I answered, "guess it is the grass."

As we are both of a certain generation, and some people have wondered what we grew on the back forty, her eyes widened.

I laughed. It was not THAT kind of grass, of course, but what the hens that laid the eggs eat as they free-range in ever-widening areas around their coop.

It is pretty amazing, and easily seen, what Nature does with sun, water, and plants. The hens that cluck and peck about, often lured to particularly choice spots by one of the two roosters, eat the green forage that makes their eggs very, very yellow—in fact, "orange" is a better description of the color of the yolks.

The color factor doesn't just apply to poultry eggs. Their flesh, too, when butchered, has healthful fat that is bright yellow. And beef grown on green grass is far better for us than the feedlot beef. Instead of feedlot beef, we might as well eat corn and soybeans directly without the middleman (or middlesteer, as it would more correctly be described.). You would notice a difference in the color of beef fat, too. Or, going one step farther, one could just eat petroleum, for that is the real source of factory animal products.

But, products that come from green grass are another matter entirely. High in good omega-3 fats—one source estimated that only forty per cent of Americans eat enough of these beneficial fats—grassfed beef, chicken, eggs, pork, and dairy products can be essential components of a healthful diet.

That brings us to this week's activity—the first churning of the season's butter. I had been anxious for some time, as I watched last year's butter supply in the freezer dwindle. As I took each foil-wrapped packet from the freezer, I counted those that were left, and last week, there were no more to count. The last pound was in the refrigerator and was rapidly disappearing into baked goods and onto toast, sandwiches, and the first asparagus of the spring.

So, it was with a great deal of relief that I poured a quart of

cream into the mixer a few days ago. In a few minutes, I had three-quarters of a pound of sweet golden butter swimming in buttermilk. I washed it in cold water until the buttermilk was gone, salted it generously, and packed it. But, this first package didn't go into the freezer. It stayed in the fridge—the first to be consumed this year.

Like the egg yolks, Buttercup's butter is bright yellow. She eagerly grazes the green grasses, meadow flowers, and forbs in her pasture, and her milk makes butter and cheese for us and sustenance for her calf. More omega-3 fats for our diet come via these luxury products.

A little later on, I will make cottage and feta cheese, yogurt, and occasionally, rice pudding, pancakes, or puddings that are mostly milk. I will have no qualms about the full fat milk I use, and in the case of puddings, we may well top them with whipped cream when we eat them. Summer eating is always a treat.

And, if all goes well, I will put part of Buttercup's yellow butter in the freezer for winter. If we have a bit of luck, there will be enough to last until next spring brings a new calf and a good supply of yellow cream for another summer.

The hens, too, will continue to range around the farmyard and into the fields, and the yolks of their eggs will stay bright yellow through the summer. The lemon pies will be colorful, the rhubarb custard will have a shading of the same color, and the deviled eggs will be downright beautiful. And, we won't mind eating them.