

We often read or hear the term “eating seasonally.” I wonder if it means the same thing to all of us. It could be that some people interpret the term to mean only that we shouldn’t eat fragile out of season fruits like raspberries during the winter.

I’m not sure that many of us understand that eating seasonally, especially in our climate, may involve consuming the same things day after day as long as they last. But, this is not a bad or hard thing to do. After all, one never hears complaints about strawberries or blueberries on the menu every day during their seasons.

When it comes to string beans or zucchini, though, there are those who say, “I’m so tired of the same old thing!” Tomatoes and cucumbers and sweet corn hold their appeal longer, but it comes the time when the cook has leftovers from these popular homegrown products, too.

If these foods are really grown at home in good soil, and if they are not contaminated by chemicals, though, one really can enjoy them day after day without feeling deprived. And, the vegetables we grow in our climate move rather seamlessly from early to midsummer to August to fall with us well fed throughout the growing season.

There are two ways to avoid boredom with our meals that seem to have the same basic ingredients day after day. The first is probably the most important in most area of the world where people are just glad if they are fortunate enough to have sufficient food. If we are hungry, food tastes good, and we seldom complain about the sameness of it.

But when we really do have a lot to eat, as most of us do who grow much of our own food, a little ingenuity in the kitchen goes a long way. There are more ways to cook vegetables than we can count off on our fingers. And the variety in preparation makes a lot of difference to us.

One of our neighbors remarked one day that he didn’t like potatoes. His family had eaten boiled potatoes twice a day all year long. He could hardly look at a potato these days.

Well, potatoes are one of our favorite vegetables, and they are certainly the “staff of life” in our household. And I like boiled potatoes just as they are, cooked and served with butter, salt, and pepper.

But, there are so many other ways to prepare potatoes for the

table, and we try many of them. We eat potato salads of various kinds, baked potatoes, fried potatoes, potato patties, mashed potatoes, scalloped potatoes, Janssons temptations (a Swedish delicacy), the potato flat bread of Norway that is called *lefse*, and many more. And, I have always like a raw potato with a little salt, too.

Meals don't have to be boring. Instead of just cooking the string beans, I sometimes sauté them in a little olive oil and throw in a few slivered almonds. The beets—a vegetable not at all enjoyed by many people—is also very versatile, and a salad of roasted beets, blue or feta cheese, onions, and a little balsamic vinegar is a tasty addition to any meal. Cabbage leaves can hide a filling of ground beef in a flavorful baked dish, or the heads can be made into sauerkraut—not everyone's choice, but a favorite of many of us. And, soon, the fall vegetables will be ready to eat, and I could write a page on the virtues of buttercup squash. I am making myself hungry!

So, what's for dinner today? Well, I went to the garden, and came in with a tromboncino squash, a couple of little yellow crookneck squash, an onion, a hill of French fingerling potatoes, some cucumbers, a few beets, and a handful of basil leaves.

The cucumbers will wait for afternoon and a pickling session, though we enjoy them raw day after day, too. But the rest will be like this: I put the beets in the oven to roast and cleaned the squash and onions, cutting them into appropriate pieces. I washed the potatoes, and they are ready to cook. I will cool the roasted beets, slice them, add sliced onion, throw on the basil leaves, make a dressing of vinegar, a little honey, and some olive oil. The feta cheese I made earlier in the summer will top the dish, the white crumbles making the bright salad even more attractive. I will cook the potatoes and serve them with butter. The squash and part of the onion are sliced and ready to stir fry. To that blend I will add some roast pork left from yesterday. That will be dinner, and we will sit down to a homegrown meal—as we always do—thankful to Mother Nature for good soil, rain, and sunshine.