

I've been thinking about Liesel Wandel's applesauce cookies off and on all winter and spring. I might have had the recipe at one time, but I never recall that I baked them. But, I have eaten many.

Years ago, when I was in graduate school at the University of Michigan, I had the very good fortune to be near the place where the Wandels lived. Their youngest daughter had been my college roommate, and her parents "adopted" me for the time I was in school in Ann Arbor. One of the benefits of having such nice people who took an interest in me was Liesel's baking. They brought cookies to me now and then, and my favorites were loaded with applesauce.

But, time passes, and years go by without our really noticing the fact, and now, it has been many decades since I tasted those cookies. But, looking around the fruit cellar when I took some empty jars to put away, I noticed that we have more canned applesauce than we will eat before the next season arrives. We don't like to have canned goods that get old. I have to throw away jars of perfectly good food from time to time because we have too much, and the new is always more tasty than the old. Fortunately, nothing is really "thrown away," since the hens and the pigs always benefit.

This excess applesauce caught my attention, and I remembered, once again, Mrs. Wandel's cookies. So, I called my old roommate, and asked if she had the recipe. She did, she thought, and if she didn't, she knew that her sister, whose favorites are these cookies, did. Later that day, I received the recipe via e-mail, and I immediately printed it out.

The next day, I baked a batch of the cookies. It makes a lot—I think I had over seven dozen when all were cooling on waxed paper on the table. And, they are just as delicious as I remember.

My friend says that though they are good, they are not her favorites—too much like spice cake. But, she also said that she thought her mother's were better because her applesauce was from home-grown and canned apples, usually Northern Spies.

I don't have any Spy applesauce, but what is in our fruit cellar is home canned—from Duchess of Oldenburg apples from the century-old trees in the yard of the farm house. And, it made delicious cookies.

There is something about the texture of these cookies that is particularly enticing. But, there is also the memory of Liesel Wandel in her kitchen, baking. And of George, showing me the various apple trees on the farm. I believe that all of these factors do influence our perception of what we eat.

"Putting a face on our food" is nearly as important to us as its taste. Knowing who grew what we eat—usually it is we who produce what we consume—is important to us, but it is also involved in the recipes we use. So, Liesel Wandel's Applesauce Cookies will find a place in the recipe box near the other "named recipes." Grandma Emma's Friedcakes, Aunt Joey's Orange Cake, Aunt Ellen's Blitz Torte, Ruth Peterson's Overnight Coffee Cakes, Merrie's Fruitcake Bars, and the

many recipes from our mother—molasses cookies, sour cream sugar cookies, apple squares, rhubarb meringue pie, and on and on and on. Food is not only important for our sustenance; it is a key to our culture.

