

Food, clothing, shelter—the three necessities of life, it is often said. Food, above all, and water, of course, no matter what kind of environment each of us inhabits. In some places, shelter might be optional, and clothing an actual hindrance. Here, though, even with the human-caused warming of our climate—with the negative results that are probably far more than the most pessimistic calculations—we require all three of these basics.

Right now, though, it is food that concerns us. With a long fall-winter-spring period ahead of us, a time when edibles must be in storage or purchased in stores, every day here on Coe Creek is involved in some way with putting up food for the months ahead.

Today's first task is blanching broccoli I picked last evening, packing it in bags or jars, and storing it in the freezer. Broccoli likes cooler weather, so it is particularly productive this time of year. I have many packages in the freezer from the early crop, too, but a count of the bags told me that we would use much more. So, the water is heating to give the fresh flowerets a scalding bath before cooling them and putting them into the freezer.

But, that is just the first food-related job of the day. In the woodshed, laid out on sheets of cardboard are tomatoes. Vine-ripened for the most part, we often pick them a little before they are quite ready to eat, since birds and small animals are also fattening up for the winter, and they seem to enjoy taking just one bite out of a big tomato and then leaving it to spoil in the garden.

This morning, those tomatoes will turn into jars of celery/garlic flavored tomato juice to line more shelves in the fruit cellar. A pint of this juice, chilled in the refrigerator, makes two glasses full of the goodness of September, just right for a small treat any time of year. Since there are just two of us, most of my canning is stored in pint jars—lots of glass cans, but nothing in volume to compare with that done by those with large families, or even as my mother did, with a family of five.

After the tomato juice is in the canner, I will peel the last of the Duchess apples, cook them to sauce, and process them as well. Applesauce has a lot of uses, from just plain as a dessert to one of the main ingredients in the Christmas fruitcake. We use many jars of applesauce.

While the applesauce is in the canner, I will have time to chunk up a couple of buttercup squash, add butter, salt and pepper, and a dash of maple syrup and bake in the oven. What we don't eat in one meal will go into containers to store in the freezer.

In between these activities that pertain to winter food storage, meals also need to be prepared. Today, that is easy. I pulled three nice, sturdy leeks in the garden last evening. Just now, I brought up three big Onaway potatoes. I will dice them, sauté the sliced leeks, and we will have leek-potato soup for dinner. With homebaked rye flat bread, sliced tomatoes—on the table every day this time of year—and a muskmelon from the garden for dessert, we will have a good meal.

And, this is just Monday.