

We are smack dab in the middle of the season of plenty here on Coe Creek. The basement supermarkets— otherwise known as freezers, fruit cellar, and root cellar—are on the verge of gathering cobwebs, as we bring home meals directly from the garden almost every day.

It starts slowly, of course, with lettuce, spinach, and other hoop-house-grown greens available in the spring. Gradually, other vegetables that fill the garden beds sprout, grow, and produce food for our table. We plan on new potatoes by the 4th of July, and there are peas and tiny carrots and an onion or two to accompany the spuds by that time, too.

The three weeks since the 4th, though, have brought huge changes to the garden and, subsequently, to our meals. For most of the year, I plan ahead, thinking the night before what we will have for our noon time dinner the next day. But, this time of year, it all depends on what is ready in the garden.

So, every morning after barn chores are finished, I take a colander and a pail and go to the garden. Usually, this time of year, what I bring into the house is not only enough for a meal, but also for the freezer. Today, though, everything I picked ended up on the table.

Covering the bottom of the pail is almost always the same. I go to the potato beds and reach into the dirt under the plants, taking one or two tubers from each hill. I give them a rinse before going on to the beds of other vegetables.

Today, I eased the potatoes from under the hills of Strawberry Paw plants. I suspect that when we first ordered this variety, it was the name that had intrigued me. But, the proof was really in the eating and in the keeping ability. And they have proven over the past couple of seasons that they are good potatoes in every way that matters to us. Today, I cooked them without peeling, really the way I cook all new potatoes.

Along with the Strawberry Paw tubers that are as pretty as they are tasty, we had a stir-fry dish of vegetables. We did have a little bit of ground beef in the refrigerator, so I scrambled that up and cooked it first. Then came the vegetables—onions and carrots first, then peppers and squash—one green zucchini, one yellow summer squash, one pale green patty pan squash, and finally, several cloves of fresh garlic. Lots and lots of vegetables.

That would have been enough for a good dinner. But, another dish on the table held slices of Opalka tomatoes and crisp green peppers, and we cleaned that platter, too. Blue and Kate even got some of the stirfry on their dry kibble. But, I didn't give them the potatoes that we did not eat. The four or five left in the bowl at the end of our meal will be slices for browning in olive oil for tomorrow's breakfast.

There is no boredom associated with fresh, delicious meals from the garden. Every meal is different, depending on what needs to be used, and the possibilities for variation are endless. It all depends on what is available each day and how inspired or inventive the cook happens to be at that particular time.

