

Early this past summer a big raccoon broke into the chicken coop and killed all but one of our young chickens. The roosters were destined for the freezer and, eventually, chicken dinners this winter. The pullets were going to be our flock of young hens that would provide eggs for the next couple of years.

The one young chicken that survived was a rooster, and we decided to let him live, since he had been fortunate to have had a stroke of luck during the killing spree. He is now a large, white Plymouth Rock that—to all appearances—thinks he is magnificent in all ways.

He had begun to lord it over the five ancient hens that are in retirement. But, this fall we were able to purchase a few pullets from a neighbor.

When we brought home the ten little red hens with a bit of white on their tails and wing feathers, the rooster was, at first, a bit intimidated. What were these strange birds that did not appear to be as quiet and elderly as his present harem? In time, though, he understood that he had a much larger job now, inviting the new pullets to come when he found a particularly tasty morsel to nibble. And, by now, he fancies himself a real king. What a lovely group of ladies he takes responsibility for these days!

All of that was of little concern to us. We were waiting for that first pullet egg! The word “retired” really does fit the old hens, and, although one of them occasionally lays an egg, we had to buy most of the eggs we used the past year or so.

After the first egg appeared, properly deposited in one of the four nests, the rest quickly followed. Now, one of the most pleasant tasks at chore time is going to the chicken coop to feed the pullets—all singing and happy—and to gather the eggs. It is a treat to once again be able to use as many eggs as I wish without thinking about depleting the supply.

So, this afternoon, I am going to make a Danish almond puff. Look up the recipe. It is easy, delicious, and a bit fancy.