

Every meal here seems to provide us with vivid mental images. I wonder if each dinner does the same for other people, and if it does, what those mental pictures might be.

I can guess that, for the cook, the scene might involve what took place in the kitchen before the food appeared on the table. Or, if she or he (probably a “she”) also did the grocery shopping, images of the supermarket might be foremost. Or, maybe, it was just the picture of the cleaning up that would have to follow the meal.

Here on Coe Creek, every time we sit down by the table and take our silverware in hand, it is the past that dominates our mental view. Just as an example, this is what today’s dinner looked like to me:

The Strawberry Paw potatoes, boiled with their jackets on, took me back to the potato patch, but not directly. The more vivid picture was the chilly root cellar with the aroma of damp soil. There, the crates of this past year’s potato harvest gave off their earthy smell. A fleeting picture of the potato rows may have snuck into my mental scene, but mostly, it was the root cellar that was in my mind.

The buttercup squash came from the freezer, but that was only a way station between the garden and our plates. I look at the bright orange squash and can see myself last summer anxiously examining the Uncle David Dessert Squash plants for signs of that wilt that indicates the Squash Vine Borer has attacked the vulnerable buttercup squash plants.

The Swedish meatballs make me appreciate the day in, day out rhythm of life on a livestock farm as we go every day, not just most days, to care for our animals. This is a concept that seems hard for folks to understand who don’t raise animals. There are no “days off.”

And when we spoon up the delicious slices of canned peaches with the taste of summer sunshine in our mouths, we appreciate those other farmers, those who grow the fruit that does not flourish on our chilly acreage. Their presence at the farmers’ market brings us the “close to local” food we cannot grow ourselves.

Everything we eat was raised by someone, even those products that have been changed, refined, and altered between field and table. Our choice is to raise as much of our own food as we can. And for the rest, we try to buy from other farmers—as close to the

source of the food as possible. We have thought of all these food issues now in the aftermath of the blizzard in western New York. Having food grown here at home is a benefit we would not like to do without.