

January is “Project Month” here on Coe Creek. After the holidays, it is nice to have a month with fewer “expected” activities. For the third year in a row, we have dedicated January to an international culinary trip. We don’t leave the farm, but we explore other cultures and countries through food.

We do not buy special ingredients for these adventures in eating. Although there are many unique flavors in foods around the world, there are also a lot of similarities, and we have not found it difficult to cook a month of different dishes without any special foods we do not usually have.

During the past two Januaries, we have cooked or baked some specific food from a different country every day. This year, we are trying a variation on this idea and are planning to “visit” through food four different countries, cooking a week in each.

Late as I am with my December 30 essay, I can report that we have started our month in Mexico. On New Year’s Day, we made corn tortillas and ate them with Sopa Ranchera, a chicken broth, rice based soup. The next day, we made flour tortillas and filled them with Frijoles Refritos, refried beans. I cooked our home grown pinto beans until they were very soft, then slowly cooked them with garlic in bacon fat until they were very thick and had lost their bean shapes. Tortillas filled with the beans and a little cheese made a filling and delicious meal.

After a week of Mexican recipes, we are going to use our Swedish family recipes and have a nostalgic virtual cooking “visit” to Runo’s mother’s kitchen through her recipes. We will make Swedish meatballs, bondkakor (farmer cookies), rotmos (mashed potatoes and rutabagas), and whatever else comes to mind during the week. The third week, we hope to take our culinary adventure to France and explore some of the many appealing recipes from that country.

We have not yet decided where to visit for the fourth week of January. Wherever we go, we will explore the unique flavors of that culture. And, as usual, some of the recipes we try will become regulars in our meals here in Michigan.

Along with the international cooking adventure, I have warped the loom for blue and natural cotton dishtowels. In between cooking and barn chores, I can weave. I must admit that January is one of my favorite months of the year. And, if the snow keeps falling as it has today, my skis will also get a workout. Life is endlessly interesting!