

On being a farm wife -And other hazards Joyce Bupp



A skim of ice coats the buckets at the outside pens for calves.

Early sunshine on this clear, crisp, bright morning has not yet climbed above the dairy barn roof to shine its thawing warmth upon the thick, black-rubber, water buckets. So, for the first of what will be many times during this impending winter season, I run a bucket of steaming hot water to pour onto the transparent, icy coatings.

The calves always seem to enjoy this ice-thawing routine and quickly slurp up the warm water in the buckets before turning their muzzles back to their rations of sweet feed mix. Chilly air gusts between the old bank barn and the calf nursery, one of the major "wind tunnel" spots on this place where the breeze is never-ending.

Chilly feet hurry me quickly toward the basement after morning chores, past fading maroon blooms of late chrysanthemums and through the cascade of golden maple leaves tumbling toward oblivion. Smoke curling above the chimney hastens the feet to move still faster toward a promise of toasty toes.

And the warmth that rushes out

with the opening of the basement's old door is like the embrace of a dear friend. Oh, how we enjoy the coziness of the wood stove!

Once a staple of every kitchen, plus often other parts of family living quarters, wood-burning appliances fell out of favor with the ease of electrification, natural gas, and microwaves. Some friends and relatives who grew up carting in wood as a regular childhood chore vow to never return to those days.

But, never having toted wood as a kid, though the Farmer did, I have no lingering hangups about a distasteful childhood chore. In fact, the whole process of selecting bits of bark and slivers of wood, strategically placing loosely-crumpled newspaper and creating a bank of glowing coals from a tiny flame seems a rather creative and rewarding endeavor. Plus a feeling of self-sufficiency and savings, in light of current fuel prices.

We've burned wood for winter heat for about ten years now, for a variety of reasons. In this old house where the ruffled curtains stir on gusty days (with the win-

dows closed), the woodstove offers a more steady and constant heat than the backup system of oil-furnace forced-air. Free fuel lies in plentiful supply over the farm's woodlots and fencerows. Only shortage is in finding time to get it cut and moved.

Mother Nature outdid herself a few months ago in supplying our firewood needs, literally, in the back yard - plus the side yards, greenhouse, front porch and parking area - with piles of downed, giant limbs. When we finally got the mini-tornado-mass cleared, scattered piles of firewood lay as testimony to the shredding of our old maple trees. These last, lingering traces of the windstorm's fury are quickly disappearing.

Enough for several more years of woodstove heat waits in the dry cow pasture, where about a dozen good-sized trees were ripped up by their roots and laid over like so many matchsticks.

Yes, the woodstove is dirty. Yes, wood splinters and bits of bark constantly litter the basement carpet. Yes, smoke and dust discolor the white curtains' ruffles and darken the endless festoons of cobwebs woven by our diligent colony of spiders.

But that is a slight sacrifice for the pleasure of sliding one's stinging-cold toes across the warm apron of firebrick under and

around the woodstove. For a place to dry damp sweatshirts and soggy gloves. For barn jeans pre-warmed near the stove's coziness. And for the best spot in the house to curl up on a blustery night with a cup of hot chocolate and a good

book.
Warming up at the woodstove is pleasurable enough it almost makes getting cold something worth looking forward to.
I said almost.

Crank Out A Winner

An Ice Cream Churn Off Contest highlights the first ever "Dairy Fun Night" at the 75th Pennsylvania State Farm Show. The Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program and Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture will be sponsoring the fun night on Monday, January 7. The Ice Cream Churn Off is modeled after previous events but with an added twist. All contestants will be required to hand churn their entries.

All Pennsylvania residents, except those that have a professional food status or are affiliated with the Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program, are invited to enter the contest. The first eight eligible entries received will be selected to compete in the contest.

To enter, contestants should print their name, address, and telephone number on an 8 1/2 "x11" piece of paper. Then, attach a complete copy of their recipe and mail to: "Dairy Fun Night, Ice Cream Churn-Off," Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program, 2301 North Cameron Street, Harrisburg, PA, 17110-9408. Entries

must be received in the Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program office by December 15, 1990, and become the property of the Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program.

All entries must use REAL dairy products. Pasteurized processed eggs must be substituted for raw eggs. Recipe entries must be original and not have been previously published or won an award. Offer is limited to one entry per family, 4-H club, FFA chapter, or other group. Teams will be limited to no more than four members.

Prizes for the contest will be awarded as follows: first place, \$300; second place, \$100, and honorable mention, a six quart ice cream freezer. Prizes are not transferable. Income tax on all prizes is the responsibility of the winners.

The complete entry rules can be obtained by sending a self addressed and stamped envelope to the Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program, 2301 North Cameron Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110-9408.

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