

On Being a Farm Wife (and other hazards)

Joyce Bupp



That was all that remained in the bag stored in the cool, moist cavern beneath the garage that is our ground cellar. Few new homes built today feature a ground cellar among their amenities. Only folks with old houses like ours still have these underground storage facilities.

But, who stores fresh foodstuffs all winter anymore, anyway?

In the days when our ground cellar served a real purpose, its spacious capacity would have been chocked full of containers of potatoes, apples, carrots, maybe a lingering head or two of cabbage. And, if great-grandma had gone to her ground cellar in late March and came up with only three potatoes, she would have looked ahead with worry. The potato was the staple, backbone, vegetable-type food of her family's diet. And the fresh

ones that would be grown in the garden couldn't possibly be ready until at least early to mid-July.

The timeless family question — "What's for supper?" — would have posed a real dilemma.

Even if Grandma did still have adequate stores of potatoes on hand by the next planting season, their natural aging process would cause deterioration in quality. The skins would be shriveling and wrinkling, making them hard to peel. Fat, white sprouts would be forming at the "eyes."

I carry the three potatoes, large ones fortunately, to the kitchen, pare them and mix them with fresh sausage meat, chopped onions, and celery for a favorite family casserole. And then remember to write "potatoes" on the supermarket list hanging on the side of the refrigerator.

"You are so spoiled," I mutter to myself. Out of potatoes? So what? Just put it on the list; there will be plenty at the supermarket. No waiting three or four months for the new crop, while scrounging through dwindling supplies for the most edible remaining ones.

Another scarcity Grandma may have incurred by spring was apples. If the crop had been short or they had not stored well for some reason, the basket bottoms might be showing through. Fall apple harvest was a long way from spring and there were few fruit alternatives. No one had even heard of a kiwi back then.

We do still have a few apples, though they never made it to the ground cellar this year. Part of a basket of nice baking apples grown by a friend hung around all winter, in a plastic feed bag covered with a heavy piece of carpet, stored just outside the greenhouse. The ground cellar was so warm last fall that I just covered them well and left them out on the coolness of the shady ground. And winter remained so mild that what's left is still there in the bag smooth, firm and sweet.

Wasting food grates against my nature, but, even if the few remaining apples had not stored as well, it would not have been a catastrophe. The orchard markets a mile up the road from us still have plenty. And

at very reasonable prices.

"You are so spoiled," my conscience nags.

That night on the bi-monthly supermarket run, I stock up on potatoes, regular and bakers. Fat, juicy grapefruits, firm clusters of grapes and a nice bunch of bananas. Carrots, fat and sweet, not shriveled from home underground storage. Lush, leafy lettuce and crisp celery.

Grandma would have marveled

at the freshness of such unheard-of, late-March food treasures. And she'd have been "plum boggled" at the more exotic produce items, chayote and plantains, jicama, starfruits, daikon, gourmet mushrooms.

I am so spoiled.

And grateful that running out of something like potatoes occasionally reminds me to be thankful for it.

Somerset Searches For Dairy Princess

SOMERSET (Somerset Co.)—The main industry of Pennsylvania is agriculture and the largest division of agriculture is the dairy industry. The Somerset County Dairy Promotion Committee is seeking contestants who are excited about the dairy industry to enter the 1995-96 Somerset County Dairy Princess Contest. The contest is to be held on June 17. To be eligible, a participant must be at least 16 years of age by July 1, and be one of the following: the daughter of a dairy farmer or dairy farm manager, the daughter of someone employed in a dairy related industry (such as an AI technician, milkplant employee,

veterinarian, feed dealer, dairy sanitarian, etc.), employed on a dairy farm or dairy farm store, or the owner of at least two dairy animals in a 4-H or FFA program. This young lady will have the opportunity to promote dairy products throughout the county by speaking to school groups, civic organizations, farm groups.

If interested, young ladies should contact Angie Shober at (814) 267-3624 for more information. The Dairy Promotion Committee is also looking for girls and boys ages 3 to 6 to participate in the pageant as Little Misses and Escorts. Parents should contact Melissa Fox at (814) 267-5302.

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republished in February and March
Also, in the March issue read about how the Indians made Maple Syrup

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