

On Being a Farm Wife

(and other hazards)

Joyce Bupp



What a lovely sight. There are few things prettier than a covering of pristine, freshly-fallen snow.

I know. I know. You're ready for green grass.

Me too.

Ready for yellow forsythia, red tulips and blue hyacinths. Ready for robins and bluebirds and white Vs of snow geese gliding north. Ready for the musky smell of earthworms and the pungent scent of skunk cabbages in the meadow swamp.

Well, maybe not the skunk cabbage.

But, there are still few prettier sights than the world blanketed in freshly-fallen snow. We were reminded again of that a couple more times in recent days, as the latest sightings of the white stuff

reburied slender shoots of spring-time grass greening up in sheltered corners. For good measure, also covered for at least a little longer were a bunch of limp-but-living dandelion shoots I spotted as the last snow was melting, thriving despite their encasement for weeks in ice-pack insulation.

And so it is that Derra Dog, a pair of cats and I take our evening walk out under stars and a slender moon shining over the latest cover of white. For us after-dark strollers, snow enhances nighttime scenery, adding visual depth and dimension. Snow clinging to tree trunks, masses of vines, frozen foliage and dried grasses accents landscape details usually obscured by the darkness.

Shadows are also more pronounced and noticeable against

the background of snow, which takes on a shade of pale gray in the early evening. Even a less-than-half moon gives off enough light against a snowy canvas to cause our little cadre of walkers to cast dark, shadowy companions, which mimic our every move.

A graceful curved area of inky black marks the entrance of underground water at the first pond. Renewed flows of the springs keep a crescent of the pond unfrozen even through the very coldest nights and the open water sparkles with reflections. Framing the breeze-rippled water is a curving rim of contrasting white snow capping the icy lids which cover most of the ponds' surfaces.

Farther along, the blanket of snow is split with a black, meandering gouge, where a tiny stream emerges in the meadow from a brief underground journey away from a pond overflow. In the shadowy world of nighttime, the stream's little ripples and mini-cascades are unseen as it silently slips its way toward the distant ocean. With a bit of imagination, it looks like a yawning chasm falling away from steep cliffs of white, rather than a simple meadow trickle.

Pale moonlight casting over

the snow spotlights each of the dozens of sets of tracks crisscrossing the meadow and meandering over the frozen ponds. Often the tracks show abrupt changes in direction at key points of interest, such as a tree trunk, or a clump of dried grass. Fox, squirrel, deer, rabbits, cat, even the tracks of what appears to have been one lone heifer strolling up along the big pond, keep Derra's nose buried in the fluffy stuff, her tail busily waving as she takes a scent-check of the passersby.

On a rare occasion, she'll pause and growl at something

sensed off there in the night. That generally sends our parade strolling back in the direction where we came from and the friendly light of the basement porch.

In the after-dark world of a snowy, moonlight night, not all is black and white. It's a range of subtle grays and deep blues, stark blacks, reflective glows and, sometimes, glittery diamonds sprinkled over the landscape.

And I don't ever need to know if any of the lines of meadow tracks or nighttime shadows under the bushes and hedgerows include the stripes of a skunk.

Celebrate National Cherry Month

(Continued from Page B2)

CHERRY SAUCE CAKE

1 1/4 cup flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup soft margarine
1 cup sugar
1 large egg
1/4 cup milk
2 cups cut up, well-drained sour cherries (save juice)

Cherry Sauce
Mix together in small saucepan:

1/2 cup sugar

2 tablespoons cornstarch

Stir in gradually:

1 cup boiling water

1/4 cup reserved cherry juice

Boil 1 minute, stirring constantly. Stir in 1/4 teaspoon almond extract. Add a few drops red food coloring. To serve cut cake with squares, top with vanilla ice cream (if desired). Spoon warmed cherry sauce over top.

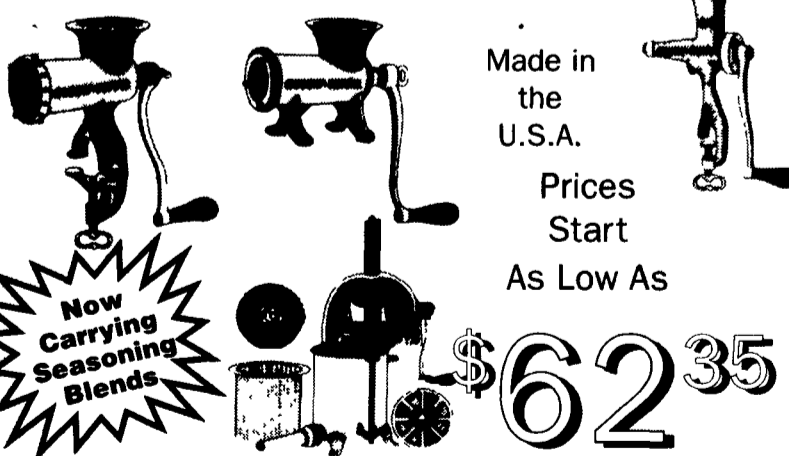


Cherries contain powerful antioxidants that may help fight cancer and heart disease, according to research at Michigan State University. Eating about 20 cherries per day could reduce inflammatory pain and headache pain.

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