



Changes

By Marcia Rae
July 28, 2010

When the blackberries, boysenberries, Marion berries are at the market, when the first peaches and apricots show up, when fruits and vegetables are abundant and verdant, and when summer is in high swing, it is hard to remember the fruitless times of the year, the bleak and dreary short winter days when we huddle by the fire and hibernate.

But seasons come and go, as does all life -- this magical cycle of birth and death, with the manure from the animals enriching the soil, and the excess from the garden feeding the chickens. There was a time when we all knew this, when we lived close to things growing and understood our place in the natural order of things. It was before we somehow saw ourselves as separate and superior to the rest of nature, to the plants and animals that we rely on for our own birth, life, and death.

I am always a bit surprised when I talk to people at the Farmers Market and they say "I have spent my \$20 for the week," as though the Market is an event rather than the place to buy groceries. And it is an event for sure, where friends greet friends, dogs greet dogs, with musicians providing the score, setting the tone, giving us a reason to linger.

But more than that, the Market is a place to find food, food that appears in its own season and then passes away. We have the luxury of satiating ourselves while it is here, eating lots of strawberries when they are in season, lots of peaches. But just because we enjoy the abundance of today, don't forget that this too shall pass. Fall will come, then winter. For sure, take advantage of the now, of the abundance that is so readily available today, but at the same time, put some by for later. Store it up. Buy extra. Prepare for the gray days so that when they come you are ready, happy even. Glad that you can sit back, relax, and be done with the busy-ness of the frantic summer.

So, you say, "how do I **put some by**?" To which I say -- let me count the ways. A freezer is a good thing, easy. Wash. Freeze. Drying is a good thing. Wash. Slice. Dry. Canning is a good thing. Cut, slice, dice, or otherwise drop in a jar. Add liquid. Heat to boiling for awhile.

But really, really -- JAM is a good thing. You can make almost anything into jams, salsas, preserves, and chutneys. And soooo easy to do. Cut, cook, and freeze or can. Last year I made jam out of great, big seedless blackberries -- full of all the great super food nutrition. Everybody loved it. I gave it as a gift and they loved me. And so I gave more, until now there is no more left to give. But as with everything about life and just in time, the season comes around. Life has renewed itself and once again the berries are ripe. Life is good. And I make jam.

Munch on This -- Seize a bit of the day in a jam-packed jar. Put some by.

PS -- See you at the Farmers Market this Saturday, 9 a.m. to noon, for the pick of the season. Music is the Patio Pickers.

PSS -- Want to help? Contact me.

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