



## *Seasonal Eating*

Ahhh.....What to have for dinner tonight.”

I know this gets said regularly at our house. In years past I was organized and sat down once a month with a calendar and made an entrée plan I was reminded of this as I listened to Barbara Kingsolver’s book, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, earlier this summer. Now my meal plans are a “little” more on the spot. Sometimes I’m on the ball and get meat out of the freezer in the morning. More often I realize it’s 4:00 and everyone’s going to want to eat sometime that night. The premise of Kingsolver’s book is to invite us to join her family’s year long local only eating experiment. Along the way the family shares their ideas and things they learned, such as meal planning in early spring and the joys of discovering foods in their season. One story they’d heard about leaks (“ramps”) was how turn-of-the-century boys would eat some so the schoolteacher would kick them out of school. My son Joe was listening to that and could relate as our school has a firm rule about eating leaks before classes are done, too. How many 11 year old boys can relate to such seasonal pleasures? After all, Meijers and Wal-Mart have fresh strawberries year round, right? I realized that our family’s menus largely revolve around what’s ripe in the garden, and what meat we have available, which is also somewhat seasonal. Greens in June and early July, followed by green beans and early summer squashes and green tomatoes (a great stir-fry combo), then corn on the cob and more summer squashes like spaghetti squash. August is the wealthiest garden month with nearly everything ripe, but fall still brings a second round of greens, winter squashes, cabbage and broccoli, late corn. Rachel loves the cherry tomatoes she finds still coming on. Even our meat supply has seasons: summer is broiler chicken season and the stretching of our red meat supply. As the last of the broilers come off pasture and freeze for roasting, we cull our old laying hens and they go in the freezer or jars for soups, stews, light taco meat, etc. The hens have a richer flavor and make a heavier broth that is welcome in the winter. Cooler fall weather and the withering of pasture also signal the time for processing the goats, or cows or pigs, that have grown all summer. These are considered “warming” meats. and provide more of the types of fats and proteins we need in the colder winter temperatures. Plus, the longer cook times for stewing or roasting a chicken or slow cooking a good chevron roast add welcome warmth to the house. In our case, it’s a good excuse to have the wood cook stove running. Ah yes, everything in its season.

So, here comes the “live in the moment” challenge. Even after the frosts, the area gardens still boast produce. Plan “in the moment” menus by working with the foods that are fresh and in season. Shop local growers first, then see what you can create. Recipes are available online or from the farmer if you get stuck. You may even surprise yourself with the joys of seasonal eating.