

Eating Locally all Year Long

By: Jen Greenberg, Abundant Acres CSA

Executive Summary:

Jen has been eating seasonally for about 20 years, and in this presentation she shares her vast knowledge with us. She goes through a season and shows us how she plans her year so that she can eat her bounty all year round. She discusses, canning, drying, freezing, lacto-fermenting, and cold storage including other season extension projects that have allowed her to grow things like ginger! Read on to learn more of Jen's tricks.

Detailed Notes:

Jen Greenberg has been involved with organic foods and eating seasonally for 20yrs. Now that she is in her 40s, she's having lots of fun with it, and that is the main goal! She lives at Red fox cooperative. There are many people involved, and therefore a lot going on at the farm. They have a winter CSA, wholesale veggies, garlic, homesteading, and a native tree nursery! This set up is good for growing socially, and growing food.

Why bother eating locally and in season? This is a question people aren't asking as much now as when she first started because the idea has become more mainstream. Here are her answers:

- It tastes good and fresh.
- Jen focuses on foods she likes. She suggests always focusing on foods you like and not to force yourself to focus on things you don't like.
- Jen hates shopping. Since she lives in the country, grocery shopping is at least an hour commitment due to the driving time! Jen would rather just go to the pantry.
- It's something they really like. It's fun to be in the kitchen. They had 12 workshops this year for people who felt like coming and learning about food preservation, and their farm.
- Saving money is big. Saving a dollar is worth more than earning a dollar because every time you earn a dollar, you pay government etc. But when you save a dollar, you save the entire dollar! Jen says that saving these dollars are worth it. Jen's goal was to retire and only work on the farm before she turned 40, and she's almost there, she likes living on almost nothing. \
- Environmentally efficient. Jen did a comparison on different ways to preserve tomatoes. She compared canning, freezing, or importing in the winter. She found that canning was the most ecological and economically efficient, followed by importing, and finally freezing being the least efficient (even when using the most efficient freezer). Having a root cellar, and lacto fermentation are also very efficient ways to store food!
- Buying and eating local foods helps support local farmers.

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Some examples of things Jen does to preserve food throughout the season:

- In February there is a lot of sunlight, so she sprouts greens on her windowsill with mushroom compost so that she gets mushrooms too! It's a tonic!
- During the summer months there is abundance! For example, beets! You can eat the greens, put them in a root cellar, lacto ferment them, make Kvass, and can use them in baking such as chocolate cake!
- Basil is also in abundance. They had a workshop on making pesto, and kids absolutely loved it. The kids would have never eaten basil from the store, but after making it themselves, they loved it, and continued to make it all the time at home.
- Another crop of abundance are berries! She freezes raspberries and blueberries. Elderberries are one of her favorites, they take a lot of work, but when you have lots of people who come to visit, there is lots of help. The Elderberry juice is very medicinal, anti-viral. Jen uses it in home for when people are sick.
- Jen also makes grape juice. She uses a steam juicer, which makes it easier.
- Jen harvests peaches and cans them to eat all winter
- Jen also does a lot of drying. For example plums and tomatoes. They have pest damage in plums so drying is a good way to cut them open and get rid of the pests so they are good to eat all year round.
- They have a friend from Haiti who comes to the farm. He had trouble with access to food when he was young, and is so happy and joyous around food when he comes to the farm. He brings so much joy, which is really important.
- They had a tomato-canning workshop, which was a great success. Notice all the guys doing the canning (refer to pictures in the slides).
- The pantry is sometimes the most important room in the house. Filled up with canned goods.
- Root veggies – the easiest thing to do is throw them in the cold room.
- They grow lots of Napa cabbage and use it to make Kimchi, which is a traditional fermented food from Korea. To make it, you cut up Napa, carrots (don't cut too small or they'll go alcoholic), ginger, and whatever else you want (like cilantro, parsley, garlic, hot peppers. Add salt, mush it all together and put it in a clean container with a plastic bag filled with water on top to keep the food submersed in liquid. The plastic bag is used because you want the bubbles caused by the fermentation process to be able to exit, but you want to keep food submersed.
- In general, you can cut up the veggies (or not like peppers) add salt and whey and leave to ferment.
- Lacto fermented foods are good for health because the lacto-bacillus stimulates good bacteria in gut. A lot of us don't digest food well, so this helps, and can have tremendous effects on digestion.
- Lacto ferments last several months. One audience member ate fermented beans the following August and they were still crisp!

Question from audience: For a gallon jar, how much salt would you have to add?

Answer. Jen uses Nourishing Traditions by Sally Fallon. And she uses and HIGHLY RECOMMENDS “four fold path to healing” by Tom Callon. But as roughly for a gallon jar you would use ¼ cup sea salt –check the recipe, and ½ cup whey. You can lacto ferment without

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whey, but in Jen's experience, it tastes better with whey. You can get whey by filtering plain yogurt (if you have dairy you can get it by making cheese too).

Question from audience: How do you store carrots?

Answer: Jen cuts off the top, and puts them in sand that has some moisture. Other people in the audience said they leave the dirt on the carrots; cut the tops off (leave ¼ inch) and put them in a plastic bucket. They cut the tops off so the carrots don't get dried out.

Question from audience: Can you speak about Kvass?

Answer: Kvass is a fermented beet drink. To make it, cut up beets, and put into a clean jar with water, whey, and salt, let it ferment, strain out the beets. The juice is the kvass!

Question from audience: How do you know when you have the right thing? Or when is the ferment half rotten?

Answer: Ferments tastes and smell fresh. Off tastes and smells, like alcohol, are off. The taste and smell barrier prevents you from eating bad food.

Best reference: Farmer boy, little house in the prairies.

Stuff that is just stored:

- Onions. The attic is a good place to store onions and garlic.
- Leeks. You can keep leeks in the garden into December, and harvest from garden if mulched. Cook down and put in freezer.
- Squash – are a winner for storing. She only puts perfect squash away. Traditionally they are stored under the bed; anywhere where it is warm enough to sleep is good enough to store the squash. Styria squash are especially great because they have hull-less seeds and they are good to eat. Jen stores her squash under the stairs. Her squash have lasted into March.

Animals and animal products:

- Meat is something you can eat all year around. They like lamb. They like to know the life cycles of the animals they eat, that the animal was raised on their farm, ate in their pasture, and was killed by them. Is very ecological. Jen feels the same with beef and chicken.
- They did an experiment with making a movable chicken coop. They used bicycle wheels and cheap plastic (a bunch for \$10). They move them around all summer.
- She makes her own yogurt. Which gives them whey. And saves money because they don't buy as much in the store.

Grains:

- They make a bulk order from Speerville Flour Mill every 4 months.
- Jen likes red fife wheat (a heritage wheat of the Maritimes). She did a program with a local school where the kids harvested and ground and made bread from red fife wheat.

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- She makes sourdough bread every week. Sourdough bread is also a fermented food. She uses a no-knead recipe, which saves a lot of time.

Making meals is so easy when you have great food all over your house and cellar. She uses the woodstove in the winter to cook. It is great because you can prepare it and then just leave it to cook and it will be ready when you get in from working.

Other great harvests:

- Sweet potatoes – she had a successful harvest.
- Nuts – when she got to the property, she immediately started planting nuts. They have hazelnuts and heart nuts. It took about 9 years to get a harvest. The heart nuts are really good, gorgeous!
- They grow dry beans too. Rewarding.
- She grew ginger. Tops great for herbal tea. She grew ginger in a greenhouse in 8 months. The ginger was started in the house, and then brought out into the greenhouse. The ginger plants grow up so you need to add soil (like a potato). She started her crop with organic ginger from the store that had buds. She tried organic and conventional, and only the organic ginger worked.
- Hoop house – to extend season. She doesn't heat because wouldn't make sense economically – financially and environmentally
- Kale! The best, she eats it every day. Long season. Can just cut it up and throw it in the freezer (no blanching). Nice to have kale and tomatoes, from freezer.
- Lemons trees! One year she harvested 31 lemons; this year she only harvested 8. They are usually ready about Christmas time. She once grew them in a drafty old farmhouse that was not warm or sunny. So you can do it too! She has had pests called scale. She treated using advice from Marjorie Willison's Gardeners Almanac.
- She's getting fruit because she has dwarf trees that were grafted. The problem with planting from seed is that lemons don't come true.

Q and A

- Jen didn't include drying when she compared the environmental efficiency of the tomatoes (while she compared canning, freezing and importing).
- Jen uses a commercial beef jerky dryer. First she pre-dries with salt in sun because it takes 10hrs to dry tomatoes and other fruit. Jen doesn't slice her tomatoes. Jen uses drying tomatoes or Juliet tomatoes – her favorites. She got the cheap jerky dryer from a friend and now she gives him some dried fruits in exchange for the deal.
- Parchment papers helps fruit not stick to the dryer.
- How does she use the dried tomatoes? Jen grinds up the dried tomatoes in a coffee grinder and puts in tomato sauces. It works like tomato paste.
- You can get lemons from the Greenbarn nursery. She has tried three kinds; Mire – small tasty like a lime, ponderosa – bigger less tasty, and Eureka – highest yielding and would buy this one if she could only buy one.

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- Jen dehydrates lots including: apples, peaches, berries, cucumbers (almost fresh tasting), beans, celery, zucchini (which she makes into chips), beet, parsnips, and eggplants, which also make great chips!
- Curing squash – put it out in the sun for a few days and roll it over. Front porch then up in attic where it's dry. She does the same with sweet potato.
- Elderberries, do you eat the seeds? She eats juice and strains out the seeds. Some say if you cook the seeds it's okay, but research this first!