

Here we are in November, at the end of one of the best growing seasons we've had since we started farming. Despite the drought this summer (which was worrisome), our well was able to provide enough water for irrigation. Without the well, it would've probably been our worst season, but with this precious water most of the crops did better than in previous years when prolonged periods of rain and high humidity brought different fungal diseases which took down the plants prematurely.

The CSA ended a couple of weeks ago, and since then the pace on the farm has been different. Although we still have veggies out in the field (those that can survive frost), and we still sell on Saturdays, we have shifted most of our attention to homeschooling, food preservation, and general farm maintenance.

The weather has been relatively mild this fall, so out in the field, some greens and roots are still surviving (carrots, beets, spinach, lettuces, kale, collards and other greens). They are covered with cloth and plastic row covers, which are secured on the ground with sandbags. The upkeep of these covers is quite a job in our windy location here on top of the hill, and we often feel foolish, not to mention frustrated, to be fighting with 30+mph wind, such as we had last weekend, which keeps ripping the covers off every time we cover the plants.

In addition to the crops that are still in the field, many of the crops we



sell come from storage. Beets, carrots, rutabagas, winter squashes, potatoes, sweet potatoes, garlic and others store for months at this time of the year, if provided with the right temperature and humidity. Our root cellar is full and Ed just finished building a second root cellar, earth-birmed, where we plan to store fruits. This year most of our fruit trees were too young to produce (except for the tall spindle apple trees which gave us enough apples for family use), but as time goes on, we expect to have enough fruit to sell and store in the new root cellar.



Homeschooling our daughters is now occupying a major part of our time. Ed teaches two days a week, and Raluca three. The cows too, take up some time each day. Raluca and Sena milk Opal each morning, Ed sets up the pasture so that the cows can be on fresh grass each day, and then there's yoghurt and cheese making. One exciting thing for us this year is that the cover crops we plant at the end of the season to protect and improve the soil (a practice we've been serious about for the past few years), are now serving the dual purpose of not only helping the soil, but also providing forage for the cows. At this time of year in particular, when the grass has almost stopped growing, and many farmers are feeding hay only, we are fortunate to have not only grass for grazing, but also lush covercrops of rye, vetch, clover, peas and forage radishes, which the cows love to eat.

The cows have brought a whole new dimension to our farm, and we are grateful, not only because they provide us with milk, yoghurt and cheeses, but also because they complete the circle of soil fertility which we have been striving for. It's beautiful to see how everything in nature can cooperate and work together to the benefit of all: the land provides nutrients that grow grass and crops; the cows eat the grass and some of the crops, fertilizing the land, improving soil organic matter and biological activity, both of which are key to the sustained health of the land. Plus, we almost don't need to mow anymore, a benefit that should



not be underestimated, thinks Ed.

Food preservation is still ongoing. The shelves are filled with jars of tomato sauce, pickles, roasted peppers, jams, and apple sauce. The freezers are full of peas, peppers, strawberries, raspberries, peaches, etc. Dried beans and grinding corn stock the pantry shelves. But sauerkraut and other fermented foods have yet to be made. Raluca's ambitions in this area are always more extravagant than she can handle (especially when confronted with the reality that there are only so many hours in the day...). Sauerkraut is a must, however.

We want to thank all of you who were part of the CSA this year, and all of you who have been coming to our farm as friends and customers. We've had people ask about joining next year's CSA. Registration is not yet open, but we will let you know as soon as it is (probably early January).

We wish you all a restful, peaceful winter. Sadly, the current style and pace of life in our culture is mostly disconnected from the rhythms of nature, and many of us complain about the cold, lack of sunshine, and other things that winter brings; but remember that this time has its purpose – this is when nature rests and restores herself for next season, and we, too, would do well to slow down and restore ourselves as much as we can. Just follow Cookie's example, seen here in the picture on the right sleeping in a grain bag in our shed.

