

The End of Summer Canning

I have been a really good “farm wife” this year with all my freezing vegetables, canning tomatoes and green beans and preparing bounty for the coming of winter. Yesterday as I was finishing the last of my provisions, I stood looking at my beautiful jars of canned vegetables and I was overcome with memories of so many happy and blessed years ago when at the end of summer I would help my grandmother with



Peggy's Take

the remains of her garden of plenty. All that would be left of the succulent vegetables would be the okra growing head high. Everything else had been canned and organized and arranged on her shelves in her little room right off her kitchen. I remember being in a sense of wonder as I added another Mason jar to the abundance of canned goods. The many shades and paints held inside the jars reminded me of a rainbow as the colors

mingled with greens, reds, yellows, and purples. She had no freezer so all of her abundance was canned in the big glass jars. I can remember standing on a short little stool to reach the big black eyes on the old wood burning stove ordered from a Sears and Roebuck catalog as I would stir the big iron pot of juicy red tomatoes as they boiled vigorously, some of the hot liquid exploding from the pot onto the eye of the stove with a sizzle. My granddaddy would come in often, checking on the fire inside the firebox, replenishing as needed, and always tasting the vegetables bubbling in the hot pot. The big quart Mason jars stood ready on the shelf beside her black stove readied to catch the hot

red tomatoes and juice. As I repeat all the steps she incorporated into her canning and preparing of her garden's vegetables, I feel a deep sense of sorrow that my daughter will never know the little woman with the never-cut long white hair twisted into a bun on top of her head, dressed in a bibbed apron, and so full of “farm wife” knowledge. I consider myself very fortunate and blessed that I stood at her side and this experience was passed on to me. I was always excited to be finished with the preparations because now was the time that her sister, my Aunt Ida, I called her Aunt Idie, would come to visit for a while and with her came my little great grandmother, Liza Key.

These were my very favorite people inside one house and I loved every minute of the visiting and so much talk about just everything! We talked about the other sister Stella, the gardens both sisters had completed, I meddled inside my grandmother's cedar chest, and I fetched sweet gum “tooth brushes” for my Granny Key's sweet Garrett Snuff. I talk about these things often with my daughter and my grandsons because I never want to forget this special time and I want them to experience the love I had for my grandmother. On visiting days my grandmother didn't want to spend her time in the kitchen so she would cook something that could simmer all day and just be ready when we were. This is one of her “simmer” meals.

Pinto Beans and Ham
1 package of dried Pinto beans (She bought from the old rolling store.), covered with water and soaked overnight.
1 T. sugar
2 T. bacon grease
1 T. pepper
1 small onion cut into chunks
2 cups of salt-cured ham (My granddaddy had cured hams hanging in the smoke house.)
Drain the water from the beans and add water to cover and then add onion, sugar, oil, pepper, and bacon grease, and several slices of the cured ham. Cover and simmer for 2 – 3 hours really slow. Keep a check on your water. No salt because the ham is very salty. Serve with a piece of crunchy cornbread.

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