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Capturing summer in a jar

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Capturing summer in a jar
 Some of the blackberries that went in to the blackberry jam.

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Posted: Friday, August 13, 2010 12:00 am |
 By Kristi Waterworth
 Marshfield Mail
 correspondent | 0 comments

A pressure cooker is an amazing thing. It has the uncanny ability to capture summer in a jar, while at the same time having a reputation as an explosive kitchen disaster in the making.

This time of the year, a pressure cooker is an invaluable tool to preserve those wonderful fruits and vegetables that our gardens make using this sort of repressive heat. Of course, in the winter, when we crack the jars open again, we don't remember the heat ... or the dry ... or all the work. What we remember is the sweet nectar of the peaches and the way the fresh flesh of the watermelon is more water than melon, or even the smell of the honeysuckle vines ... but not the work. If we did, I don't think we'd be doing it year after year.

I thought, since my garden went belly-up in the heat, that I would go to the Marshfield Farmers Market this year and find some lovely things to put in my very empty and sad-looking jars. I did, too.

The Asian pears, yellow tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers and watermelon and corn beckoned me. Each found its way into a bag that followed me home. Once home, they hopped into the sink and began peeling and slicing themselves in preparation for the jarring activities ahead.

Or so the sweet fruits of summer would have us believe: In fact, I sliced, chopped, peeled, cored and pulverized until I could pulverize no more. I consulted ancient, dusty charts of wicked "pressure cooker voodoo" for correct processing methods and times (actually, I consulted the web: <http://www.uga.edu/hchfp>).

I burned myself, I made a huge mess of my kitchen, I dirtied all the pots I own. I never once asked myself why I was doing it ... we know why we can.

By canning, we keep summer evergreen. Even in the depth of the worst Missouri winter, we can climb into the back of the pantry and find a little bit of summer, be it a jar of peaches or sweet corn fresh out of the garden or watermelon rind pickles, and it takes us back to the best parts of the summer.

We don't find humid 100-degree days back there ... just the simplest joys with screw-top lids.
 I guess you could say that we can because we can.

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Posted in News on Friday, August 13, 2010 12:00 am. Updated: 8:52 am.

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kwaterworth1



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