

Empty Nester Recipes

And this week...

Oh yes, we are definitely on our way to autumn.

The nights are drawing in, dawn light comes over an hour later than it did just a few weeks ago and, though daytime temperatures still err on the side of the summerlike, evenings have a new coolness to them as soon as it gets dark, so much so that my neighbors lit a fire in their fireplace a couple of nights ago. The smoky smell that wafted over to me made me think of bonfires and grilling chestnuts and the hot stone baked sweet potatoes that we used to be able to buy seasonally in Tokyo when I was little -- all fully autumnal smells. The cats have started to sleep behind my knees again, as they do with uncanny accuracy as soon as the nighttime bedroom temperature hits below 65F, rather than just hanging out at the foot of my bed. The swing chair on the front porch from where I observe sunrises and the local fauna and flora, now has a blanket thrown across its back "just in case" because my breakfast coffee sessions have become a bit nippy at times -- the perils of being an early riser, I guess. Gutters have been deep cleaned and many days involve a tiny bit of leaf raking in preparation of the main event once fall foliage season really gets underway.

We are on the cusp of this seasonal transformation where produce is concerned too. Though nobody seems to have told my son's tomato plant, which is still producing both fruit and flower, I have the end of tomatoes and corn to work with this week, as well as my first butternut squash of the season, beets, and broccoli, not to mention a myriad of mushrooms. At \$5.99 a pound for shiitake mushrooms -- unheard of! -- I have already

taken advantage of the price and dried several pounds worth for use in winter stews and soups.

And, speaking of drying, I am winding down my little herb garden for the season and my kitchen looks like a witch's hut of yore, with bunches of lemon verbena, sage, thyme and oregano hanging from s-hooks until the time comes to pack them away. Of course, I am also a modern crone, so as of last week I have logs of frozen Italian parsley in the freezer, as well as cubes of mint, tarragon, Vietnamese coriander, sorrel and lime balm stored in plastic baggies -- the lime balm preserved in lime simple syrup for drinks and the rest in water or oil.

There is also a veritable stockpile of pesto made from the basil that I planted. On the other hand, the lone straggly pot of basil that I bought at the beginning of the summer is still exuberantly fragrant and has multiplied tenfold since purchase, despite having been plundered for use in many a Caprese over the past few months. I have been watching the weather forecast like a hawk to ensure that, despite the fact that the basil loves its sunny position in the hanging basket on the front porch, I bring it in before the first frost. We will see how long into the cold months I can keep it alive on my sunny kitchen counter once I do.

I am so excited for fall to finally arrive properly; it is one of my favorite seasons -- for clothes, colors, weather, scenery and produce, in equal measure. I do hope that my fall recipes live up to my hype of the season.

As far as recipes go, below is last week's post recap, all dishes/full meals under a half an hour long to get from fridge and pantry to table, some by a lot:

[Tofu Scramble](#)

[Tangy Lentil Soup](#)

[Agrodolce Fig Toast](#)

[Chicken Dinner for One](#) (strangely enough, though the chicken was very tasty, I most recommend this for the accompanying vegetables which I recommend making on their own with a side of couscous -- delicious!)

[Tofu and Tomato Panzanella](#)

[Turkish Eggplant Stacks](#)

[Sockeye Salmon with Mint-Lime Sauce](#) (with pea shoots and a potato)

[Secret Ingredient Grilled Shishito Peppers](#)

[Tofu Saag Paneer](#)

[Mustard-Tarragon Chicken with Carrot Coins](#)