

Healthy Food

9/15/25

Prompt: Are you determined to eat healthy food or not?

I ignore all of the warnings about processed/ultra processed food because we eat very little of them. (Does cheese count? Not in my mind, as a good Wisconsin girl.) This is not particularly a planned avoidance. Two of my loves, actually three, are what keep our diets healthy.

First, as everyone knows, I love to garden and have had a veggie garden since I left college with the exception of my off and on years in Chicago. Apartment living does not allow for gardening. All of the processing of our food is done in our kitchen.

This leads directly to the second reason we don't eat much commercially processed food. I really enjoy cooking. There is currently a commercial on TV with someone talking to a graduating class about entering adulthood. She lists off adult responsibilities and say something like "Now you will need to plan what to eat for supper.....for the rest of your life." So true. Fortunately this is a process that I enjoy. The challenge, which I happily embrace, is what to do with all that produce coming from the garden, or especially from the CSA. When ramps showed up in our delivery, I actually had never heard of them. (For those not in the know, they are wild leeks that grow in the woods.) Now they are the highlight of my spring. Or celeriac. During my "Superager" test, one of the challenges was "Name all of the vegetables that you can think of"in a specified amount of time. I threw in

‘celeriac.’ The tester had never heard of celeriac, so the next day, I brought her one. We were going up in the elevator with a few random strangers. She help up the celeriac and asked “Does anyone know what this is?” No takers. Just confused looks. There are a couple of things that show up in the CSA box occasionally that I haven’t mastered yet, for example, burdock roots. Most everything else they throw at me I can manage.

The third reason I cook from scratch is creating dishes that work for Bob’s palate. Black pepper burns his mouth so I never use it. I basically know what he likes. Someone once asked him if he liked a particular dish and he responded “Ask my wife.” Occasionally I have resorted to purchasing a healthy sounding packaged dinner item. We all do that sometimes. But those occasional forays into the frozen dinner isle have generally been unsuccessful. Almost always pepper is the culprit or too much salt. So I return to working with basic ingredients where I am in complete control. Of course there are exceptions – hot dogs or pizza - but, as I kept telling Ian when he was a teen, boys can’t live on pizza along. Unfortunately, he did try to prove me wrong and survived to adulthood in spite of it.

I always tell Bob that he is lucky that he married a gardener who loves to cook, a match, if not made in heaven, at least made in the kitchen.