

Bowl of Cherries
10-12-2015 by Harry Zirkelbach

In youth, the family ate every week day meal at the kitchen table which sat the four comfortably. In summer, depending on the month, there was a bowl on this table holding fresh fruit of the season. This began with cherries, then peaches, pears, grapes, then apples which might be there until the New Year, for before the first heavy frost, apples were harvested, each wrapped in newspaper, preserving these in the basement, a few brought from the barrel in the basement, for a treat as long as the barrel provided.

This stream of ripe fruit was possible as fruit trees loved the climate along the Great Lake, where in many a neighbor yards and vacant land, these fruit trees thrived, required little attention, outside the harvesting moments.

Cherry trees then, were the first to ripen. These were all of the Sour variety. They weren't really sour, but differed greatly from sweet "Bing" type which did not thrive there. And they were smaller. But with loving care, produced pies that were unbelievably delicious. Every boy and girl volunteered to prepare the dough, make the pie crusts, add the cherries, count the minutes the pies were in the stove's oven. Then volunteer to burn their lips with that first bite.

The season for picking cherries could last a month. Our picking them when ripe was essential for while they were a treat for just about everyone in our community, there was another admirer who fed upon this fruit when ripe, all day long. While

many species of bird feasted on the cherry tree product, it was the robin that had the insatiable appetite. Some days it would not be unusual to find a whole limb of cherries, where one hungry robin had nibbled on every piece of its fruit..The zealous neighbor might even toss a cheese cloth over his tree to protect his fruit until he was ready to pick his ripe cherries.

The cherry season was overlapped by the peach, then pear, then apple, then grape.

Still that first bowl of cherries, holds a special place in memory, for each summer it had been a half year without a piece of fruit. Those fist bites recreated the memory of delicious, was the harbinger of the months to come and the fruit bowl's offerings for another season.

It was also this reminder, it's great to be young,
part of a family and community
that shared life and its treats with you.