

## The Lost Art of Food Preservation with Root Cellars and Canning

*by Liz Gibbons*

When my parents were planning to marry they bought a lot and arranged to have their future home built, a two-story, middle-class home. They lived there for over fifty years. My parents used the floor plan of another home on the block with some changes which included a vestibule entry on the front of the house and a root cellar in the basement.

The full basement could be entered via a stairway from the kitchen or through an outside entrance down some cement steps near the back of the house. The root cellar room was a fairly small room and was not heated. In it we stored potatoes, onions, turnips, cabbage, carrots, beets, oranges, grapefruit, apples, and other such produce.

My father always had a garden behind the garage that produced amply. My mother canned fruits and vegetables including tomatoes, green beans, corn, peaches, applesauce, and cherries. These were stored in another room in the basement that had shelves on one side from floor to ceiling. It was strange, but my mother never taught me to can. I have frozen or dehydrated some of my garden production, but other than occasionally making jam, I have never canned food. I do store some freeze-dried food plus rice, millet, oats, and beans in case of a long term emergency. This practice was influenced by meeting a woman brought up in the Mormon faith. Her husband died unexpectedly a few years after we met, and she said their stored food helped her get through the first few months until she could focus on earning more income.

Among our neighbors and the homes of various friends, our home was the only one that I knew of that had a root cellar. It is something I have always missed having in homes my husband and I have bought. With our economy uncertain I think food preservation is a practice that should be revived.