

Across the flat from every direction sleds drawn by teams were plowing through the snow, ~~all~~ their objective being the ranch at the narrow canyon mouth. The sun was bright, the air crisp, each sled well padded with hay and blankets warmed by bricks and stones. In each sled was a family ^{chattering} ~~chattering~~ excitedly over the New Year's party.

I, too, was warmly wrapped and seated in a ski-sled, too joyous to do much talking. My shepherd dog raced back and forth, stopping frequently to touch noses with the sorrel mare with the silver mane and tail, who picked her way along the snow packed trail. Silver felt the excitement, too, as she daintily put one foot in front of the other, and tried to do one of her dance steps. My husband, clean shaven for the first time since fall, pulled the ear flaps on his cap more firmly around his ears, and whistled blithely.

A party! I watched the mountain sheep and deer quietly eating with each other where Morris had put hay for them. Sometimes they mingled friendly fashion with the domestic cattle, for this kind-hearted man had fed the animals for the last ten years, putting up extra hay, which was hauled twice a week during the winter to the little grove of sheltering pines.

Families were arriving every minute, men, women, children, babes in arms. Neighbor greeted neighbor, and I was almost hysterical for I hadn't seen another woman for three months. We women didn't visit much from October to early April. I had been really cabin-bound, having been blind for two weeks from too much reading and the sun on the snow.

From the large stove ^{where} ~~where~~ pots and pans bubbled merrily, the odors of the forth-coming feast tempted the appetites of each and every one. Twenty-two people in the ranch house made the rafters ring. Two babies less than a year old clung to their mothers, wide-eyed and almost frightened by the hub-bub. The older children were frantic ~~with~~ ⁱⁿ their eagerness to ^{crowd} a winter's play into a few hours.

A table that stretched the entire length of one large room was covered with snowy tablecloths and set with shining china and silver.

Soon from the kitchen housewife after housewife emerged ^{heaving} ~~emerged~~ heaped platters and bowls until the table groaned with the load of food. Roast goose, turkey, elk, venison, stewed chicken and dumplings, fried cotton-tail rabbit, dressing--three kinds, mashed potatoes, candied yams, home-canned vegetables, jellies, pickles, bread and light rolls, steaming cups of coffee, huge pitchers of milk and buttermilk. It was a feast for the Gods. With the warning "save room for dessert" we started to eat.

About four o'clock the wind began to blow, and before families could be gotten into warm wraps and teams hitched, a blizzard held the cabin in its icy grip. The men anxiously scanned the sky, trying to ascertain the length and fury of the storm. Mothers and wives commented quietly about home tasks, but the futility of the situation was so apparent, they settled down for a real visit. Card games started up, a square dance began, and elderly women knitted or compared crochet work.

For two days and nights that blizzard raged, at times the trip to the barns, made imperative by the need of the livestock, was all that a husky man could endure. Large rocks, kept for just such an emergency, were heated and carried to the chicken coop to keep the fowl from becoming too chilled. The third day saw the storm break, I bid my hostess good-bye,

the last
to leave.

Buffalo berry catsup.

I was the last to leave.

"How did Ma Williams say she made that Buffalo berry catsup?

It had just the proper spicy tang to whet our jaded appetites during these long winter days. I forgot to ask her, but I know you found out." I asked.

"Wasn't it kind of her to bring that gallon of catsup for my party?"

Rosie commented, her face tired but contented with her social success.

Then she repeated Ma Williams' recipe.

"Wash berries thoroughly adding just enough water to keep the berries from scorching, cook until easily strained through a colander or thin cloth, for one gallon of berry juice, add 4 tablespoons salt, 3 of black pepper, 3 of mustard, 1/2 ^{tablespoon} of cloves, allspice, 1 tablespoon red pepper, 3 garlic, 1 pint of vinegar, and sugar if desired. Place the garlic and dark spices in a cloth, boiling the mixture about a hour and half."

"Thanks, " I said, and then continued, "If she can do it, so can I, and with a patch of Buffalo bushes within a half mile of the house every fall, there is no reason why I can't have plenty of the catsup in my root cellar ~~every fall~~ ^{each season}. The trick of the thing is to pick them while they are good and red, and right after the first fall frost, which in this country comes too darn early."

another homesteader trick is make catsup of the native buffalo berries