

## **Fruit Flies**

**By Gail Grenier Sweet © 2003**

There was a time I felt embarrassed by fruit flies in my kitchen. Dawn St. George changed that. She was dating a friend of the family, and the first time he brought her over to visit, my husband and I had been doing a lot of canning. Fruit flies were everywhere, infuriating me, floating about in that lazy way of theirs that seems so aimless but must be full of fruit-fly purpose. Anyone who has ever tried to get rid of fruit flies knows how impossible it is. They're too small for flyswatters; you have to wait for frost or famine.

I could see that Dawn noticed them right away. I inwardly shrank. Then her face brightened up and she said, "Fruit flies! They take me back to my childhood. The kitchen is always full of fruit flies on a farm in September."

The way Dawn went on about them, fruit flies were a sign of a good and healthy home. After inwardly shrinking, my chest began to swell.

At the height of our canning era, Mike and I put up 300 jars of pickles, tomatoes, and I can't remember what-all-else. We took pictures of each other beside the colorful quarts and pints lined up like soldiers on the counter top and kitchen table. As if defeated by the produce, I posed lying down and Mike posed holding up one of his aching feet.

It was the 80s, our children were small, Mike's garden was big, and we were 20 years younger.

Since then, the garden has disappeared, we bought a glass-top stove that we discovered makes it impossible to use a canning kettle, and our children are grown. I can't figure out why we're more busy instead of less, but it's true.

Then last summer we joined the Springdale Farm community-supported agriculture project. Every week from May into December, we get a half-share of produce from the farm.

Once again, my counters are full of colorful organic stuff that makes my mouth water. I've experimented with vegetables I never heard of before. Once again it's a race between the fruit flies and me. Sometimes I fall behind and we have to do serious vegetable rescue.

But it's a good and healthy kitchen again. Dawn would love it.

The End

[This appeared as a column in *The Menomonee Falls News*.]