

## The Slow Down

By John

This is a great time of year for a host of reasons. The most obvious is that the pace slows. I was talking the other day to Linda, our boss at Gardens of Eagan about her time farming in California. We often talk about how hard it would be to farm year round, never having winter to force you to stop. The lesson that she learned was all about pace. Co-workers telling her she had to pace herself or she was never going to make it. I think that makes a lot of sense when you come from a place where farming is seasonal. Even though our production season last about ten months, most of the work is May through late September or early October. Basically, vegetable farmers have 5 or 6 months to make enough money to live off and keep the doors open for 12. To do this, our pace is basically one where we drive ourselves into the ground, recoup for a few months and then do it all over again. By mid October we can smell restful days close by. Sometimes its more than just a bit difficult but I think between the two options I will always pick the seasonal. This may seem to conflict with our vision for a year round CSA since there would be no break in the work. However, even in a year round CSA, the vast majority of crops would have been harvested in the aforementioned 6 months of insanity. Other crops would be coming out off the greenhouse, which is quite pleasant on a cold winters day. At any rate, this past week we could really feel things beginning to slow. The potatoes are all out of the ground and that field has been plowed, composted and sown into a winter cover. The storage beets are all in the cooler and we have started working on the carrots, hopefully with the rain this week the ground will soften making it much easier to get the carrots and parsnips out of the ground. We also pulled all the tomato stakes out, mowed the peppers and eggplant and pulled all of the plastic mulch and drip irrigation hose out of the field except for a few beds of lettuce yet growing. Those fields were disked in to chop up the residue and break up the surface, after the rain we will chisel plow, add compost and sow winter rye in. By early next week well over half of the farm will have been put away to rest for the winter. There

### WHATS ON DECK

The final week of the season will see more beets, potatoes, carrots, parsnips, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, onions, garlic and green tomatoes. We may have either or both radishes and turnips. We can expect kale, collards or chard, plus head lettuce, loose-leaf mix, possibly bok choy, broccoli raab or spinach. Not too bad at all for the final week of the 2011 season.

still is lots of work to be done between now and the end of the season, but the sense of urgency is beginning to wane. We are starting to have time to get caught up with other things and plan for next year. The fall and winter are where we shift from spending physical energy to using creative energy. This is perhaps the single biggest reason I am glad to not farm year round. If it was January and we were still bogged down with harvesting lettuce, squash tomatoes, peppers and the like I doubt we would ever get out of the production state of mind. It isn't until we step out from the heat of the action that we can reflect on what makes farming so special. We can ask ourselves what are we doing? Why are we doing it? Is it working and what can we do about it? We can take time to think about solutions to problems and improvements to our production systems. We can improve our production planning and record keeping. Most importantly we have time to dream, maybe some dreams are beyond grasp (any takers on a beer share grown and brewed on the farm?) but it allows us to focus our creative energy into our own value system as farmers. It helps us to set a path for the coming year and beyond by helping us set goals and priorities for not just the farm but for ourselves as farmers and just regular people. So maybe our creative impulse will carry us off into the stratosphere or the realm of the impractical, but we always land back on Earth and where land is always ahead from where we took off. It's having time to dream that will make our farm a fun and exciting thing to be a part of for years to come. Our farm is just in its infancy, and so far as we can tell the sky is the limit.



Finally some rain!



Baby Bok Choy and a little Spinach.

## News and Notes

- **Non-Farm Pickup:** If you are unable to come to the farm for the final pickup next week or to get your storage box the week after, we will be at a members home in Bloomington on Saturday October 22<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> from 10am-12pm for pickup. If you would like to get your final share or winter box there, let us know and we will give you the address.
- Please contact us if you are interested in learning more about becoming a site coordinator or site volunteer, or if you just want some more information about what it is and how it works.
- If you have any leads on a potential drop site in the Inver Grove Heights area please let us know. If you would like to volunteer a site at your home or office you will receive a free full share as rent payment each and every year we are there.
- If you would still like to order a Winter Storage Box let us know.
- We still have a few chickens available for sale as well. When they are gone they are gone until next summer.

### Featured Item

I know that we have given out cauliflower several times already. But with the weather finally beginning to feel a bit more seasonal feels like cauliflower weather. You will get one of our white, orange or purple varieties this week. While I am a bit more traditional and prefer the white, the colored varieties are a lot of fun and will turn lots of heads on the stand or on your plate. Good cauliflower is quite a challenge to grow; it is very sensitive to rapid shifts in temperature with particular sensitivity to heat, which to this point October has been full off. It can also be totally ruined by the sun, making us either tie the leaves up around the head or finding varieties with leaves that tightly wrap around the head to protect it from sun-scauld. It is very susceptible to bruising from harvest, trimming and packaging as well. It is well worth the trouble; whether as an eye-catching compliment to a veggie platter or a phenomenal soup cauliflower is one of my personal favorites. I have had it keep fresh in a Ziploc bag for several weeks in the crisper drawer, but it is best used within 7-10 days.

## Recipe of the Week

### Creamy Cauliflower Puree

- 1 head, cauliflower
- 3 garlic cloves, crushed and peeled
- 1/3 cup nonfat plain yogurt
- 2 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 dash fresh ground pepper, to taste
- 1/8 teaspoon chives, for garnish

Steam cauliflower and garlic together until very tender.

Place the cooked cauliflower and garlic in a food processor.

Add yogurt, 2 teaspoons oil, salt and pepper; pulse several times, then process until smooth and creamy.

Garnish with chives, if desired drizzle 2 more teaspoons of olive oil. Serve hot.