



Shareholder Newsletter Sept. 30, 2010 Vol. 11, #9

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**Come to the
Fall Festival!
Saturday,
October 9th
3:30 – 5:30 PM**

Our annual Fall Festival is always a fun time. The events are as follows:

- **Cider pressing** with our hand cranked apple press, using the No-spray apples from the old orchard on top of the hill
- **A farm tour** for adults and kids
- **A scavenger hunt for kids** with prizes from the farm
- **An amazing juggling show** by the Jazzy Juggler, Nathan Bynum. Check out his website at www.jazzyjuggler.com. You can also see him juggling at our farm on YouTube!

Bring a snack to share. Wear comfortable outdoor clothes and shoes. Friends and family are welcome. Please let us know if you plan to come, and how many will be with you. We hope to see you there, rain or shine!



Full Circle: Lettuce is starting to grow again, after a long hot, dry summer that extended into the official start of Fall. You'll get some in at least one of the last two shares.

Farm Notes:

- **Next week (October 6-7) is the last week of shares**, despite the recent summery weather. Frost and Fall are just around the corner!
- **We got about 2 inches of much-needed rain on Monday.** It's a relief, since the river had just gotten so low we were about to stop irrigating from it. It has been absorbed by the thirsty leafy greens that have been languishing in the September heat. We're hoping that this weather change brings a few leaves into the last shares. It has definitely hurried along the gradual spread of blight in the tomatoes, though we should have a few until the frost (which could possibly come this weekend).
- **There are ongoing self-guided tours available on the farm.** Come anytime to the barn and grab a map and a self-guided tour, and take an enjoyable mile-long walk on the farm to see what's happening here. We set it up for last weekend's Rappahannock Farm Tour, which was very successful for us this year. Below is stop 13 on the self-guided tour—the chickens! They are feasting on vegetables, insects, seeds, and grass from the field.



Groundhogs— the new Deer



As you probably know by now, we have a great appreciation for the benefits of having a thriving ecosystem on our farm. We try to encourage a variety of insects to inhabit our farm year-round, to pollinate our crops and to eat the insect pests that would like to eat our crops. We also employ tillage practices that encourage a diverse and healthy soil ecosystem, which we think contributes a lot to the excellent flavor of the vegetables we grow.

We're not in harmony with all animals that live in our area, however. When you enter the farm fields, you go through the gate of an 8-foot high deer fence. Over our first six years farming, deer became more and more of a problem on our farm until, three years ago, we made a \$26,000 investment in deer fencing. It has been worth every penny, and probably has already earned its expense back and then some. Without the deer, we thought our mammal problem might be over. It wasn't. Groundhogs are our new deer. Like deer, they have no real natural predators—no wolves live here any more, and the coyote population, though perhaps on the rise, is minimal. The result, in our area, is an unnaturally high population of herbivores that have harmed our ecosystem's diverse plant life, making it hard to grow a garden in the process. (For an eye-opening look at this problem, read "Where the Wild Things Were" by William Soltzenberg. There's a whole section on deer.)

Like deer, groundhogs reproduce quickly and eat a lot of greenery. They especially love vegetables, particularly sweet ones like melons, winter squash, and tomatoes. Above, you see a trap situated in front of a groundhog hole that was adjacent to one of our melon plantings this year. The family ate bites out of dozens of melons. It's baited with another of the groundhogs' favorite foods—tomatoes. We've trapped about 2 dozen groundhogs this season— not a lot of fun, but it's part of producing the vegetables we promised you at the start of the season.



Healthy, tasty squash muffins

We love baked goods as the season changes and the house starts to be in need of some warming. Here are some of our favorite squash muffins— they contain a variety of flours to make them a healthy breakfast— you can experiment with the amounts of non-wheat flours, or substitute anything for wheat or spelt flour if you'd like. The quantity can be halved— this amounts intends that you freeze some for later. ~Rachel

4 cups cooked, mashed butternut or other winter squash (the easiest way to prepare it is to halve squash and scoop out the seeds, Prick all over the skin of the squash with a fork, and place it in a baking pan with about 1/4 inch of water. Bake at 375 degrees for about 1/2 hour or until the squash is completely soft and can easily be scooped from the skin.)

While squash cooks, beat together in a large bowl:

1/3 cup canola oil
1/2 cup light olive oil
1 cup sugar
1/3 cup dark molasses
1 Tablespoon Vanilla
6 eggs

Mix together in a medium bowl:

2 cups unbleached white flour	1 Tbsp cinnamon
1 cup whole wheat flour	1 tsp cloves
1/2 cup oat flour	1 tsp allspice
1/2 cup almond meal	1/2 tsp nutmeg
1/2 cup flaxseed meal	
1/2 cup wheat bran	
1 1/2 tsp baking powder	
1 1/2 tsp baking soda	
2 tsp. salt	

Preheat oven to 350. Add about 1/3 of the dry ingredients, mix, and then add about 1/3 of the squash— alternate until everything's mixed. Avoid overmixing. If the batter seems thin, you can add some more flour. If it's too dry, add some applesauce or more squash. It should be scoopable but not pourable.

Mix in 1 cup dried cranberries and 1/2 cup walnuts or pecans if desired.

Scoop into oiled or lined muffin tins— fill so batter fills about 2/3 of each tin. Bake 12-16 minutes for mini-muffins, or 18-25 minutes for regular size. Test by inserting a toothpick in to the middle of a muffin— if no batter sticks, the muffins are done. Let them cool for a few minutes in the pan before removing from tins and

Don't forget the seeds! Left, Isaac and Nicholas have a good time helping to remove the seeds from yesterday's squash pulp— cooked in the toaster oven with some olive oil and salt, they'll make a tasty and nutritious snack.