

# Fresh from the Farm

## One Step at a Time Gardens

Jan Libbey & Tim, Andrew, & Jess Landgraf

### Week of October 13, 2008 – Post season #1

*Today begins our post-season note from the farm. The notes will focus on the ongoing work at the farm, continuing work of local food development in North Iowa and across the state, a weekly recipe feature, comments on the changing seasons. If there's something you'd like to hear about in particular, please let me know. This is a pretty flexible format and time of year.*

*We'll provide these stories and occasional photos through the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of December, take a break, and resume again after the New Year. So...stay with us.*

*Jan & Tim*

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### **Out in the Field**

Monday we pulled in the rest of the winter squash crop – harvesting nearly 1,000 lbs. This crop will be used in our last farmers' market sales, our Thanksgiving and Winter deliveries, and some late season wholesale we have with Wheatsfield Grocer in Ames. The flat rack is now covered with squash, pulled out daily for curing in the sun, and tucked back in the shed at night.

Wednesday was our last chicken run for the season. Tim and I headed out around 5:30 a.m., aided with pick up lights and a headlamp. The first thing we do is move the pens onto fresh ground so it's cleaner working with the birds. Chickens aren't very excited about moving around when it's dark and cool so the move was a rather slow process. But by a little after 6 a.m. the cart was loaded and Tim headed off to Greene, IA. We have developed a good relationship with Ardy, the plant manager. Every year on our last run, we check with Ardy about her plans to be in operation next year and she confirmed this fall that she'll be there next year. With only three state inspected poultry processing facilities in the state, this is an important issue. Without Ardy's plant, our chicken operation would be severely compromised.

While Tim was off with the chickens, I was listening to the radio and kept hearing reference to nighttime temperatures. I listened three or four times before I was really ready to believe it. Yes, our first hard freeze was on it's way. I headed out to clean off the peppers, eggplant, and tomatoes from our field plants. By the time Tim returned it was time to batten down the hatches on the hoop house. Amidst the breezes, we managed to get the side panels on and closed both end doors. The beautiful tomatoes, pepper, eggplant, and lettuce inside should be well protected now. The other crops in the field are hardy enough to handle the cold night temps.

Next chore is cleaning off the chicken pens and pulling them back to the shed for repairs and winter storage and preparing for our only remaining weekly farmers market – on Friday in Mason City.

### **What's Cooking?**

Have you ever had vegetables disappear into that deep, dark corner of your refrigerator only to emerge fuzzy and only fit for the curious budding scientist? This week, with a bit more free time, was our chance to clean out some recent items that were sidetracked with field and family commitments. In the end, we found a pile of tomatoes that were still viable and ready for roasting in the oven. I was hopeful that this week would promise enough time to work with the final product all the way to the canning or freezing...but it's already Thursday and I think I'd better freeze the roasted tomato sauce and plan to can it next week.

On our counter sits a small collection of winter squash. The Belmond Area Farmers Market ran a series of ads featuring recipes, including the one below on stuffed squash. I plan to include a recipe weekly. I'd love to have contributions from our members, so please send along your favorite fall recipe!!

### **Stuffed squash**

1 medium winter squash (acorn works really well)  
½ lb. ground beef, browned and seasoned to taste  
¼ C. Green pepper, chopped  
1/8 C. Onion, chopped  
Cheddar cheese, grated  
1 T. minute rice (optional)

*Slice squash, scoop out innards, and place in baking dish, side down with small amount of water. Bake in 350-degree oven for ½ hour. While squash is baking, prepare ground beef and other ingredients. Turn the partially baked squash over and place mixture in cavity. Sprinkle with cheese on top. Return to oven and continue to bake another ½ hr. Serves two.*

### **Local Food in the News**

Just in the final weeks of delivery, we provided resources in our Weekly Note and as hard copy reference sheets to encourage our members to take an active role in speaking out for local food and sustainable agriculture. This election season has energized a desire for new direction and local food is clearly one of those directions getting more and more mainstream attention. I'd heard talk among other farms with membership programs about the resource we have in our membership, but I hadn't seen anything written about how farms were attempting to leverage their member resource. So...I proposed to the editor of one of our favorite small farm newsletters that I would write up a story about this effort. She responded favorably and just this week we received a copy of our October issue, which included my article. This is quite exciting to see one's name in print in a journal like this, but what's more important is the feedback we received from several members that suggested they, indeed, were welcoming such encouragement and resources.

As I write this, the news reporters remind us that the national election is less than three weeks away. But the Election Day itself is just the motivator that started my conversation with our members. I believe we have much more work to do and will continue to explore ways this farm and our members can contribute to the growth of a community-based agriculture in our state and nation.

### **Scenes and Seasons around the Farm**

Late this past weekend, the trees around the farm finally hit peak color. Quite a few leaves had already dropped so among the bright oranges and yellows was the emerging gray. Tuesday night, there was a break in the clouds just around sunset and we ood and awed at the illumination of the trees across the road. The late afternoon/early evening brought with it some blue gray backdrop for the bright leaf colors. Wednesday night we ood and awed as the full moon crept into view along the eastern horizon. The farm is located just a mile west of a quite a few wind turbines. For a while the moon looked like it was strung up between two of the turbines. In contrast to many common farms that sport a yard light, ours is very dark. We have no yard light as such...by choice. So lately, I have enjoyed the growing moon and now the full moon lighting my way as I've returned from various evening chores outside.