Report from the Field

As I write this, I am passing a herd of beef cattle grazing in a field on a beautiful hillside in Vermont. The picturesque landscape, green pastures, clouds skimming the mountaintops, and serenity are what I think of when visualizing the ideal farm. We are on one of our many expeditions to learn about and find a good milk cow that will do well on pasture, and to put that ideal look into practice, with a purpose. Possibly this attraction to the farm appearance is from our own evolution with animals; since we have been herders for so long we perhaps know, conceivably by instinct from centuries of doing it, what is healthy for the land, the animals and in turn for us. For our farm, we believe that integrating grazers into our production is critical to the long-term health of our land. We also feel that it will be an excellent learning experience for our children and those that come to visit the farm. Here is a cow in the herd we were considering.

The changes in the seasons are apparent. The fall brassicas, such as broccoli and cabbage, are looking extravagant and will start reaching maturity this week. The cabbages are less likely to bolt this time of year, compared with the spring. In the spring, the window of harvest is narrower before they will split open and send a flowering stalk towering to the sky. Similarly, the buds of the broccoli heads are slower to open, making our harvest window wider. They also tend to have better flavor in the fall; cooler nights help with the taste.

Some of the hot weather crops are nearing their end. We'll still have some squash, we have a third small planting that is just starting to come in, but the cucumbers are officially done. Tomatoes will continue, hopefully throughout September, but in smaller quantities, especially the cherries. The summer seems to fly by, and the time we have with these crops as well, but the harvest has been very good. Eggplants should do well for a while longer, and peppers will likely produce more in September than they have to date.