



Philosophical Ponderings of a Farmer

Farming & Perfectionism (c) 2019

I recently came across an email exchange I had with a customer over the winter and it got me thinking about my slightly obsessive compulsive nature. It went something like this:

Nancy: What varieties of winter squash do you have available? I'm looking for something small...

Meghan: Hmmm - I've got only large Red Kuri's left (they are beautiful, though). I'm attaching a photo of the smallest one so you can judge the size (I know you prefer the minis :). Let me know if you still want it.

Nancy: You are so cute! Who else would send me scaled pictures of squash? That looks perfect actually. I am growing into squash...wow, who would of thought...

To me, it seemed totally natural to send a picture of the squash along with my hand and a pen for scale. But the more I think about why I did it, the more I realize that the perfectionist in me might not be something you typically find in a farmer.

Why? Because farming is imperfect. With so many variables that are outside of my immediate control (like weather and pests), farming will never be perfect. I know this...but I still have a hard time leaving a few weeds in the field, for example.

I am constantly self-checking, trying to determine how good is good enough. I often ask myself if my customers really notice beautifully bunched kale with the stems chopped at exactly the same length. Or, put a different way, will these things cause them to pay extra for my produce over someone else's to help me cover the extra time it takes? If not, then maybe it's not worth it.

I think I was drawn to farming partially because of its imperfection - it is a way for me to learn to know when to stop once something is done well enough. I still struggle with these choices every day, but I am getting better. And my perfectionism does come in handy, as long as I can keep it under control. For instance, pickling requires certain steps be followed the exact same way each time to ensure a safe and consistent product. And I can definitely do that. In fact, getting it out of my system in the kitchen often helps me relax a little in the garden. At least that's what I keep telling myself :).