

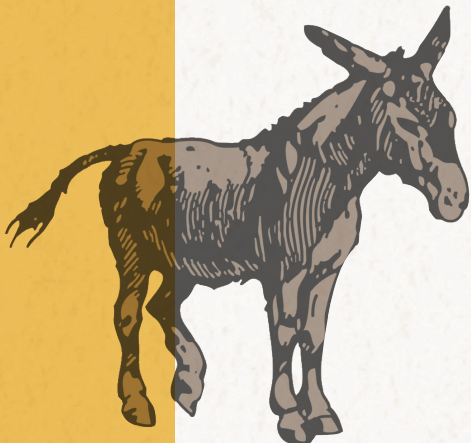
Autumn

Early autumn in the Hudson Valley is the most abundant season for locavores! The great summer veggies are still rolling in, plus later crops like winter squash, potatoes, Brussels sprouts, onions and garlic. As the days get cooler, our appetite for heartier food matches the ripening crops. The sheer abundance at farmstands and farmers markets can be a bit overwhelming, so take it slow, cruise around before you buy anything and check out all the varieties. Then go through a second time to fill your market basket.

I love collecting a variety of winter squash—from the buff-colored butternut to the big bluish-green hubbards, the bright orange kabochas and the wildly spattered carnival acorn squash. At home I pile them in a bowl or basket and they're a big, dramatic decoration. If kept cool and dry, winter squash will miraculously stay good and edible until spring, if you can bear watching your arrangement disappear bit by bit.

The hearty flavors of the kale and cabbage family mellow after a frost or two, which slows their growth and sweetens even brussels sprouts, which some find too bitter earlier in the season.

Apples are a wonderful local specialty. You will be amazed to find dozens of varieties of apples grown here with romantic, exotic names like Northern Spy, Golden Russet, Winesap and even Lady Sweet. Fresh local cider is just extraordinary, and there are lots of local breweries now producing hard cider, a great beer alternative. Grapes, raspberries and pumpkins round out the plentiful fruit choices.



autumn

1 medium white, green, gold or purple cauliflower
½ small red onion, very thinly sliced
½ cup oil-cured black olives, pitted and coarsely chopped
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
Salt and pepper to taste
1 cup breadcrumbs
¼ cup parsley leaves, minced

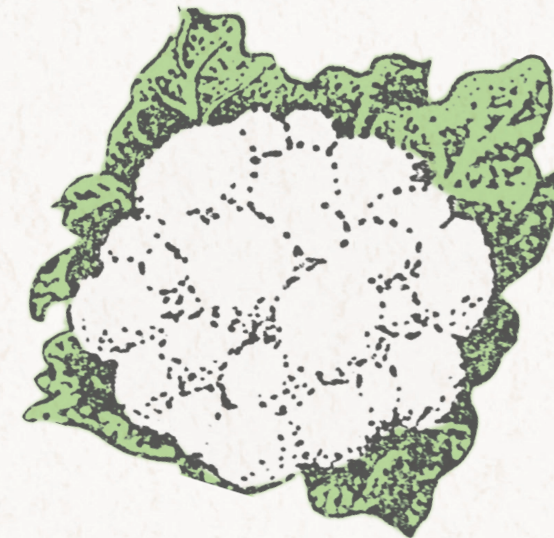
Trim the large leaves and peel the base of the cauliflower. Cut it into florets and bite-sized pieces. Steam until crisp-tender in a basket over boiling water, shaking the pot once or twice to cook the vegetable evenly.

Meanwhile, in a medium skillet over medium-high heat, warm about half the oil, then add the bread crumbs and toast until brown. Spread over a paper towel to cool.

Put the steamed cauliflower in a medium bowl along with the onion and olives. Drizzle with the rest of the oil and all the vinegar and sprinkle with salt and lots of pepper. Toss and set aside.

Mix the bread crumbs with the parsley and sprinkle the cauliflower with half of the crumb mixture. Pass the rest at the table.

4 servings



Cauliflower Salad with Olives and Bread Crumbs

Italians have wonderful ways with cauliflower. This dish is both simple and surprising.