

The New Frontier

The Mendota Research Center Golf Course

By JACK MacKENZIE, CGCS
North Oaks Golf Club

The morning is hot, humid and so still that not even the quaking aspen leaves are whispering, this after a three day monsoon that would have tested Noah's Ark. As you drive the course you are aware of an unpleasant gaseous smell and your heart skips a beat when you look into a mower basket and see a haze of purple mycelium instead of grass clippings, what do you do? Whom do you call?

With the trend toward warmer and wetter summers we may have to consider the development of new and aggressive turf diseases. Who better to help us handle the malady with control measures and communication abilities than our own MGCSA Extension Turf Pathologist? Sound far-fetched and out of reach? Well don't be surprised if this becomes a reality sooner rather than later.

The MGCSA Board of Directors is in discussions with the community of Mendota Heights with the intent to manage the Mendota Par 3 Golf Course for

profit through the creation of MERGE, the Minnesota Environmental Research Golf Enterprise. MERGE would be responsible for developing a management team to operate the golf course with the revenues being split with the City of Mendota Heights as well as oversee the research to be conducted. We are currently waiting for the City Council for Mendota Heights to discuss the viability of this project from their side and make us an offer.

Implementation of the plan would be identical to any other start-up or operation of an existing golf course. The goal would be to provide an exceptional product and generate a significant profit. Day to day operation would be conducted by a Superintendent. Keeping the books and paying bills would fall under the guidance of Scott and Jeff Turtinen. Proceeds from the project, revenues from rounds played, would be split between the community of Mendota Heights and the MGCSA. The property would have multi purposes: pro-

vide green space for the community, be a destination for applied turf science and source of revenue for that research. The income would be returned to the MGCSA, earmarked for research, some of which would go to the Mendota RCGC for specific scientific applications and some to the TROE Center.

It is anticipated that after a short period of operation contributions to MERGE from the MGCSA and other sources would generate enough funding to retain and support a full-time Turf Pathologist capable of conducting and evaluating real life experiments. Once on board, the pathologist would pursue funding for even more experimentation, monies from a variety of entities including the USGA, GCSAA and pesticide manufacturers. This stream of money would create a self-sustaining position for the pathologist.

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Besides conducting paid research at the Mendota Resarch Center Golf Course, "our" Pathologist would be available for on-site visits to any MGCSA golf course for a very low fee, probably transportation expenses. And the Pathologist would be invaluable for the dissemination of information at regional seminars and the state conference. The pathologist position would be visible and research in demand by both the pesticide companies who want it done and the MGCSA membership who will benefit from the reports generated.

Beyond pathology, many more experiments could be conducted. The RCGC has the potential to develop continued evaluations from NTEP Trials originally conducted at the TROE Center on the University of Minnesota Campus. It would be a real life demonstration grounds for the development of low and high input grasses. Fertility and pesticide fate studies are also potentials at the Mendota RCGC as well as water management and even cultural practice studies.

Besides benefiting from the research, how does the membership of the MGCSA fit into the equation? Competitive business practices and the creation of an in depth paper trail will be necessary to comply with the partnership between MERGE and the community of Mendota Heights. In an effort to maintain the business integrity of the venture, no contributions of soft or hard goods would be accepted. Rather than establish a perceived advantage over other area courses, competitive bids would be evaluated for all operation of the property. Should the winner of the bid desire to contribute proceeds from their sale or lease back to the MGCSA, it would be graciously accepted and applied toward research. Certainly those contributing would be recognized for their support.

This endeavor, the first of its kind in the nation, is currently being closely monitored by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and has been since they got wind of the concept over a year ago. They appreciate that as interest in applied science declines at many higher institutions of education, new destinations and creative ideas must be developed for turf research. The Mendota RCGC is being looked upon by the GCSAA as a cutting edge concept and as a potential template for other associations to mimic. It is critical we are the first to implement this project so as to ensure interest and financial support from a wide variety of avenues.

Still sound far-fetched to have our own cake and eat it too?

Don't be so skeptical. Who assisted in the development and continued support of the finest turf science facility in the state of Minnesota, the TROE Center? You did! Who found and retained two of the top turf minds in the industry, Dr. Brian Horgan and Dr. Eric Watkins? You did! What association maintains an incredible credit record and follows through upon obligations important for the advancement of their membership? Yours! What organization is largely responsible for one of the biggest and best regional educational programs in the country? Yours! Your support toward the progressive ideas of the MGCSA has made us one of the best local associations affiliated with the GCSAA. Should we reach an agreement with the city of Mendota Heights, soon you could have a staff member at your disposal, an extension Turf Pathologist directed by the changing times and demands of the MGCSA membership.

A destination for research, your research, is being created for the benefit of all turf managers in the state. Although we cannot change the weather, together we can develop a plan to contend with its effects. Through the creation of a destination for research, the position of an extension pathologist and an available turf consultant you are managing your destiny, making your drive about upon the course a little bit easier.

The Savory Super

Maple Syrup

Maple & Balsamic Vinegar Dressing

- 1 tsp. dry mustard
- 1 tsp. cilantro
- 3 tbsp. balsamic vinegar
- 2 tbsp. maple syrup
- 1 tbsp. lime juice
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. black pepper

Mix together the first six ingredients. Whisk in oil until dressing is emulsified. Salt and pepper to taste. Refrigerate to store for several weeks.

Maple Broiled Scallops or Chicken Breast

- 4-6 sea scallops per person,
or 1" pieces of chicken breast
- 1/3 strips of bacon, 1 per scallop or chicken piece
- 1/4 cup maple syrup
- 1/4 tsp. horseradish

Mix syrup and horseradish. Wrap each scallop or chicken piece with 1/3 strip bacon and secure with a toothpick. Place on broiler pan, brush with syrup, and broil 3 minutes. Turn, brush, and broil 2-3 minutes more, until bacon is crisp. Serve hot.

Maple Apple Dumpling

- Pie Pastry - your own or purchased
- 4 Medium Apples
- 2 Cups Pure Vermont Maple Syrup
- 1/3 Cup Granulated Maple Sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon Cinnamon
- 2 Tablespoons Butter or Margarine

Heat oven to 425° - roll out pastry and cut into about 7" squares. Pare and core one apple for each dumpling. Place apple in center of each square.

Mix together the Granulated Maple Sugar and Cinnamon - fill apple cavities. Dot each apple top with about 1/4 tsp. Butter. Bring opposite points of pastry up over the apple. Moisten pastry to seal it together. Place in baking dish.

Pour Maple Syrup in bottom of dish around apples (not over them). Bake 40 to 45 minutes until crust is nicely browned and apples are cooked through (test with fork). Put dumpling on serving dish, drizzle with hot syrup from pan and top with whipped cream or ice cream.

(Editor's Note: This is the first in a series of favorite recipes from members of the MGCSA. If you have a recipe you'd like to share, send it to the MGCSA office.)