

Big Maple Family Farm, LLC

NEWSLETTER

Sept. 15, 2025

A Farmer Remembered

Grandpa was always into farming. Even when he “retired” he went to work at a friend's farm to help him. Once it's in your blood, it's really hard to “walk away,” which is why we always remember and think “what would Grandpa do?”

Today is grandpa's birthday. It's the day we often sit back and take a second to remember what he was like and think about all the things that he would do on the farm. It's hard to believe that we are 5 years without him and his quick words of wisdom with the farm.



Grandpa and Grandma were the ones that I remember



shaping the farm. I remember grandpa going from being a dairy farmer to growing produce. In the process we tried so many things as a family to make the farm successful. I remember processing deer for years, growing lots of produce and picking for hours, I remember selling corn by the road and it was always our job as the kids to run out and help the customers. In those days, the kid that got there first usually got the tips. Then I remember the transition from my grandparents to my parents. I remember some shifts again when I went away to college. Things just started to get smaller because us kids got older and there just wasn't enough help. We always sold sweet corn and potatoes and I always made sure to come home some weekends and help pick up. The farm just continued to shift. I remember when my parents were not exactly thrilled with the idea of horses coming to the farm for what I was being called too, and grandpa just sitting quietly but when the horses came, he loved it. Grandpa's philosophy was always to use what he had but when we decided to tear an old building down and get a new one for our store, he voiced his concern. However, once it arrived he

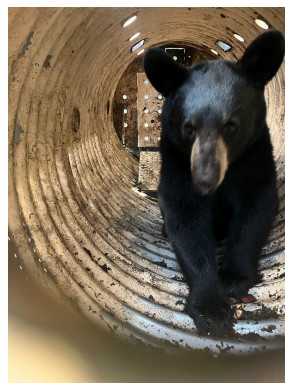
was the first one to sit there and enjoy the change we were making. I always felt that he was just stuck in his old ways but when he started to see the positives in the change, then he was excited for them. I don't like remembering him through his period of cancer and the struggles at the end, I like looking back at the great things and the moments that really shifted the farm while he was here. I enjoy remembering the endless trips to the farmers market for him to chat and us kids to work (LOL). He was a great farmer, and I often miss his knowledge and thoughts of wisdom as we move through periods of growth, bad years, and great years. He only saw the store go in and so my biggest question now is “I wonder what he would think of how we run things today?” Each day is never guaranteed but in the days we have it's important to make the best out of them.

Wildlife and Farming Updates

The bears have had such a great time partying in the field (check out picture). They have literally flattened one section of it. We spent time getting some great



pictures of them and we are lucky to have been able to rehome one lucky bear. He has moved to the beautiful mountains in PA away from the farm as he partied a little too hard in the



field. It has been great to have such supportive game wardens in the process with the deer and bears. We have been able to utilize the Ag Tag program, they have helped us trap a bear (and still trying for the other two), and they are informative when it comes to questions about some of the wildlife we are catching on the cameras. As much as wildlife is great to watch and they have their benefits in the ecosystem, we are being over run because hunters in the area have gone down in the years. I remember as a kid we would have a field full of trucks and now we are begging people to come hunt. Consider talking to your local farmer if you are interested in hunting. Meet with them, learn their problems, because population control is important to having the best possible outcome for crops and forest life.

Farm Updates



Wow, the farm has been busy. We hope that you are comforted knowing that your local farmer is working hard to feed you and others in the community throughout the winter. We have spent the last two weeks canning, with lots more to go. Last year we did well over 1200 canned goods and our goal is to hit that or more. We are hoping to sell the remaining 2024 canned goods this week and bring out the 2025 products by the end of the Sept. As of today, we have officially canned 795 jars of food for people (including us). We have also finished baling all the straw, second crop hay, and managed to get all the hay home from down the road. We are also working on moving our final round of meat chickens from the brooder to a bigger coop, and the turkeys are growing like crazy. We are getting ready to clean the barn, get a heavy use area

built, and it's time to dig potatoes. It's going to be a crazy time here the next couple weeks, but please pray for rain and keep supporting your local farmer this fall and winter. We will have some great products to purchase for you and your family.

Turkey Orders

If you haven't taken the time to order your Thanksgiving Turkey, the reservations are going fast. A \$40 deposit is required and turkeys will be \$5.25 a pound. Please go to this link here and get your turkey reserved



today: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScW68_RPgKj9Wbgf3_xVL5DXCkBgqTMU91JhJXRd5XwjWr6hA/viewform?usp=sharing&oid=100833011242219227283

Frost, No Rain, Heat, Cold, Mother Nature Just Can't Decide

If there is one thing for sure this year, it's that mother nature is really having a mental breakdown. She can't decide what she wants to do, and it's honestly one of those year that many of us have truly not seen before

in farming. To have the amount of rain that we did in the spring and delay our growing season, to have early frosts predicted making it even shorter on the other end was heartwrenching. We knew it was coming and spent the weekend preparing, we needed to pick the produce to save what we could. We spent a total of 7 hours picking everything and wow was there alot of stuff. Of course we couldn't get it all because some things weren't ready yet but we managed to get what we could and hoped for the best. Thankfully all four nights of frost that we have had thusfar (the first two were very patchy) did not harm things. The next two nights were a little harder and it appears leaves were the only things damaged and we are watching things continue to grow. It has been a very stressful period but we got it done and were able to sell much of the stuff thanks to all of you who continue to support the farm. Thankfully we are still in the game and able to offer veggies still. Here's to praying we get some eggplant :)



Education Is Continuous

Many of you know that I work Part Time for the Penn State Ext. Office as the Master Gardener Coordinator. I truly enjoy the program and what it stands for because even though I am called to be a farmer and feed people, I also value teaching others how to grow the food for themselves. This year the program set up a workshop series that helped people throughout the season of growing their own gardens. We concluded the series here at the farm learning all about compost and canning. Marlene Pierce the food preservation educator was present and helping to educate everyone on canning practices. It was a great evening and everyone enjoyed the class so much. If you are interested in learning more about the workshop series, we

will be doing it again in 2026 and encouraging more and more people to grow their own food.



LAMB	VS	BEEF
● Healthier fat composition particularly with Omega 3s		● Fewer Omega 3 fats
● More Selenium		● More Zinc
● For some people it might be easier to digest		● For some people it might be harder to digest
● Higher in Protein		● Less Protein value due to processing meat
● More Vitamin B Values		● More Vitamin A Values

Understanding the Food You Eat

Have you wondered the benefits of the food you eat? Maybe you are learning more about higher protein diets, or you want to eat better food. While beef is a great option, lamb is actually an ideal meat. Lamb is higher in protein and you will eat less of it than you would beef. Lamb also contains selenium which is a much needed mineral for our bodies. We often hear "i don't like lamb, it's so gamy" or "I could never eat such a small animal" but let's break that down for you. There are different types of sheep, meat sheep and wool sheep. In the past we raised sheep for their wool but now we raise a different breed called hair sheep. Wool sheep have lanolin in their system while hair sheep do not. That lanolin gives a

weird taste and scent to lamb. However our sheep are designed to be a great option for your plate. We say they are a mix between beef and venison and it tastes amazing. Especially if you like grilling! Now let's break down the "small animal" part of the problem. Lamb meat is from age birth to 14-15 months old. Our lambs are usually over a year old before processed because we prefer to raise them on grass which is a slower growth rate. Having that slower growth, natural products for food, and a caring farmer, makes for great tasting meat. If you want to try some lamb, come visit us today or order in your next bag. There is lots of different cuts but our favorite is the chops or the steaks! We hope to see you trying or recommending lamb to someone.

Fall Fundraiser Coming Up

The horse program is gearing up for fall as we start looking at the needs of the horses and the program, it's time for a fundraiser. Our program is fully volunteer only and we strive to keep costs low by working hard to raise the needed funds for things. As volunteers become sparse, we have opted to move into smaller style fundraisers as we are no longer able to put on the fall festival. This year we want to present a "Grand in your Hand." We have 100 squares to sell and one lucky number is going to win \$1K in cash. This type of fundraiser helps us provide for the horses, and our riders, and keep costs low. This fall we are preparing for a local school to come for a 6 week program. These kids will get to engage in positive equine experiences. Our goal is to charge the school a very small fee for our services so that they can use the funds to provide the transportation in order for these students to have this experience. That is where fundraisers come in so that we can continue such things for our community and allow others to have their lives enhanced through equines. If you would like a number or two, please reach out to Amanda today. The support of the program means so much to us, the volunteers, and those who experience these equines.



Donkey Snuggling Schedule Is open for Fall

The world is full of so much worry and stress and fast paced day to day expectations, that our bodies never get a chance to settle down. So why not take 30 minutes and visit with a cute cuddly donkey and let those things just pass by? The idea of snuggling animals has come from dogs and cats. When we snuggle our pets our oxytocin rises and allows us to relax and feel happy. It calms our body and helps reduce cortisol levels. It is a great feeling after snuggling. Donkey is a snuggler, in fact most donkeys are, so we want him to help you today so that you can get a snuggle or two in. Let him help you calm your body and feel relaxed in this crazy world. You can now schedule at this link:

<https://calendly.com/ambalon46/30min>



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