

Fall 2009

Greetings from the farm

On my 6:00AM walk to the paper box this morning something was different. It wasn't that old hoot owl I hear regularly or the thump of my Border Collie "Dixie Cup's" tail against my leg, not even the crowing of "Jerk," the chicken boys' pet rooster announcing a new day. It was the rustle of the leaves from a cool fall-like breeze with a little north on it. Gone was the muggy that I'd waded out through each morning for the past 3 months. Could it be, dare I even think, that fall is within sight? No, it's just the late August tease we get now and then, a subtle warning for us farmers that it's time to go over that mental list of things that have to be done this fall. Of course, we've got to finish up those tasks were behind on from summer first. Still, a change of season on the farm is always greeted happily; the anticipation of all the good things that come with each and an, "I'll see you next year" to all the good that's going. I guess life's always good on the farm. Coming or going.

Food Inc

Our farm was asked to represent grass farmers on a panel discussion following a showing of the movie, "Food Inc" in Charleston. It's quite a film and if you get the chance be sure and see it. It's sort of an examination of our industrialized food production system; the system we've been bucking for years. It was nice to see the anger and passion of the people attending who just had no idea the system had gotten so rotten. I received a lot of questions wanting to know, "what can I do?" The simplest thing is to go to farmers markets and support local farmers by buying what you can from them. Be sure, however, that the people you're buying from are actually growing their stuff and not just peddling something that they bought from this same industrialized system. There's a lot of this going on at our local markets and I've complained to the market managers with no resolution. You can ask the managers as well to make sure those selling at their market live up to the unspoken but implied notion that they actually grew it themselves. If you want to know who's who, just ask when you can come visit their farm. Hesitation speaks volumes.

Lucky Cluck

The chicken boys, as Les and I call them, have successfully brought a product from idea to market. They began selling their whole broilers a few weeks ago from our booths in Charleston and Mt. Pleasant and have received great reviews. We couldn't be prouder of them. With the completion of their first batch, they invited us to a tasting. Mike, the trained chef in the bunch, grilled up split halves seasoned with lemon grass (that he grows himself) and they were outstanding. There were a lot of proud smiles around the table that night, theirs for actually successfully raising the chickens, and ours for having a small part in helping them get started. Doing pastured poultry the right way is not without its challenges and I'm sure they would join me in thanking you for your support.

What Would Pa Claud Say

My Granddaddy Oliver always had cows as far back as I could remember. As a kid, I'd ride with him in his old 50's GMC pickup in the evening to check on them. He loved to

sit and watch ‘em spread out across a Hunter green sea of grass and listen to the “chomp” as he called their grazing. To this day, it remains one of my favorite things to do on a quiet afternoon just before dark. I’d love to hear his response to the idea that cows today are finished in feedlots on corn (excuse me, that’s a “balanced ration”) without a blade of grass in sight. And also that our grass method is considered extreme, fringe, crazy, antique take your pick. His words about the natural sensibility of a ruminant animal perfectly designed to eat grass, instead eating a “balanced ration” would be too crusty to repeat. It’s comforting to me that research is proving that mine and Pa Claud’s old time method produces the healthiest meat, the cleanest environment, and the happiest animals, in short, a sustainable system, the way it once was and should be again.

“and the end of our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time”

-T.S. Eliot, “Four Quarters”

-Thanks for allowing us to be your Grass farmers,
The Olivers of River Run Farms