



## *Hello Friends!*

Spring has sprung here at Pleasant Valley Farm! We have been thrilled to welcome eight healthy little lambs, twin goats, and 18 piglets to the farm so far this spring. We are also hatching about 50 chicks every week, so it's a busy time full of new life.

As the grass begins to green up and flowers begin to bloom, we're seeing our first crop of the season sprouting as well. The crimson sprouts coming up through the mulch mean our rhubarb plants are gearing up for another great season. Our blueberry bushes have lots of buds coming on, and barring the late frosts we had last year, we hope to be able to offer organic, hand-picked blueberries at the stand this summer. We're also seeing green in the herb garden, as the perennials like oregano, lemon balm and chives break dormancy and begin to grow again.

Our seed orders are in for the year, and we're anxious to begin planting. We are in the process of starting lots of plants from seed. While we do not sell seedling plants, we try to raise as many plants from seed here as possible. Plants like tomatoes, melons, squash and peppers will be started inside, while faster-maturing vegetables like lettuce, corn, peas and green beans will be started outside later in the spring. We are continuing to expand our selection of heirloom vegetables and I've included an article on page 2 to help answer some of the most common questions I've received about these special vegetables. With the unseasonably warm weather we've had lately, we've even started planting some cold-hardy crops such as spinach, beets, onions, peas, lettuce and carrots outdoors so you can look forward to finding them for sale when we reopen for the season.

### **EARLY SPRING HAPPENINGS:**

- ◆ Chicks hatching weekly. Contact us to find out what breeds we'll have for sale each week.
- ◆ Rhubarb is sprouting
- ◆ Seedlings are sprouting in the greenhouse and the garden
- ◆ Preparing for plowing and other field prep

## *Name the Lamb Contest*

While not every animal on a farm gets a name, we do name the ones who become part of our breeding stock. We are excited to welcome two ewes into our permanent flock this spring. We're asking for your help in finding the perfect name for one of them this year. Our nameless baby girl is the first daughter of our ewe Meadow, and, like all lambs born this year, her father is Rambo. Like her mother, she's a flashy combination of black and white.

To enter, simply send us an email with your suggestion. The winner will receive a \$20 gift certificate to our stand and be announced in the June newsletter!

The rules are simple: we're limiting each person to one entry, but each person in your household may enter separately. The deadline for entries will be May 1st. The decision of Emily and her flock is final.

Take a look, and let us know your suggestions!



We're anxious to hear from "ewe"!



### **PLEASANT VALLEY FARM**

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## What is an Heirloom?

Webster's dictionary defines an heirloom as "a valued family possession handed on from generation to generation." In this case, we're not talking about jewelry or furniture, but seeds. Most commercial varieties are hybrids. While the vegetables they produce have lots of good qualities, like long storage or disease resistance, the seeds that are produced either won't sprout or will produce a plant that is totally unlike what you grew last year. Because of patents, it may even be *illegal* to try to save seeds from some commercial varieties as well. Heirloom varieties are not usually grown by large corporate farms, so they rarely appear in grocery stores, and some are even on the verge of extinction.

When you grow heirlooms, the seeds will produce the same results year after year if you take the time to save them

from one growing season to the next. They are also part of our collective gardening heritage, and the rights are not owned by anyone. Because they are meant to be eaten fresh, not shipped across the country, they may not have the same keeping qualities as the produce found in most grocery stores, but they are generally much more flavorful.

We try to expand the heirlooms we grow each year, and this year is no exception. This year we expect to be offering the following varieties:

**Beans**– Kentucky Wonder, Provider, Christmas Lima

**Cucumbers**–Marketmore 76, Double Yield

**Lettuce**– Black Seeded Simpson, Grandpa Admire's, Crisp Mint

**Corn**– Bloody Butcher, Earth Tones Dent, Strawberry Popcorn

**Tomatoes**– Martino's Roma, Brandywine (Sudduth's strain) and ReisenTraube

**Melons**–Chris Cross, Blacktail Mountain, Delice de la Table

**Carrots**– Scarlet Nantes

**Squash**– Giant Pink Banana, Watham Butternut, Burgess Buttercup

**Potatoes**– All Blue

**Peppers**– Red Mini Bell

**Herbs**– Borage, Thai Basil, Lemon Balm

...plus more! We're always tempted to add new varieties until the garden is full, so the list is subject to change. If you are interested in learning more, just ask when you visit us!



THERE ARE  
 NUMEROUS HEALTH  
 BENEFITS FOR YOU  
 WHEN YOU BUY  
 PASTURED  
 POULTRY. PLUS,  
 YOU'LL LOVE THE  
 REAL CHICKEN  
 TASTE!

We are excited to bring you pasture raised poultry again this year. While many places offer grass fed meats such as beef, pasture raised poultry is less common. We raise our chicks in bottomless pens, called tractors, which allow our birds to eat things that are naturally part of their diet, such as grasses and insects. We move these pens daily, providing our flock with fresh food as

well as a clean living space.



## Pastured Poultry

Our pens move near our garden spaces, which provides benefits for the plants as well. The poultry manure enriches the soil, and every bug eaten by a bird is one that won't be eating our garden plants. This healthy environment also enables us to eliminate the growth-enhancing chemicals, unnecessary antibiotics and hormones used in most commercial poultry farms.

According to nutritional studies, there are numerous health benefits for you when you buy pastured poultry. All grass fed meats are naturally higher in

antioxidants, vitamins A and C, and beta-carotene. Pastured meats are lower in fat than commercial meats and are higher in omega-3 fats, which have health benefits as well. Our customers also love the real chicken taste!

Our first broiler chickens will be available Memorial Day weekend, when the stand opens. We will offer fresh, farm raised chicken throughout the summer months. These are sold as a whole bird, averaging between 3.5-6 lbs each. We also anticipate offering pasture raised turkey in the fall.

## *Farm to Table a Success!*

On March 26, Emily and Dan traveled to the David L. Lawrence Convention Center in Pittsburgh to participate in the Farm to Table conference. As members of the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA) and the Buy Fresh Buy Local program, we were invited to show off some of our products at PASA's table.

We chose to bring some of Emily's home-canned creations. Conference attendees were able to sample Black Forest Preserves, Carrot Cake Jam, Ginger Garlic Mustard, Thai Hot & Sweet Dipping sauce, and Horseradish Mustard. These products were also for sale Friday morning

when Emily & Dan were present. By far, the biggest hit was Emily's Carrot Cake Jam, a



spreadable creation that tastes just like the dessert, and is made with organic carrots grown right here at the farm. If you missed the chance to sample or buy any of Emily's home canned creations, don't worry! They will be

available for purchase every week right here at our farm stand. We also offer free samples here frequently.

Everyone who stopped by the table got to learn more about farms who produce local food. PASA's goal is to educate consumers about the value of eating locally and to help farmers use more sustainable methods. Our thanks go out to Mia Farber, PASA's Western Region Outreach Coordinator, who organized the table and allowed us to show off what we do. We also want to welcome everyone who stopped by and signed up to be a part of our newsletter community!

## *Working Horses*

One of the more unique aspects of our family farm is that we choose to use horses to work the fields. I like to say that our logo is more than just an image; it's really how we do things. We are asked on occasion if we are Amish, like some of our neighbors. We are not, our choice to use horses has nothing to do with religion and everything to do with a pace and style of life of our own choosing.

You'll never see a large tractor pulling the plows through the fields, but chances are if you

drive past the farm this spring, you will see Dixie and Dolly, our Belgian mares, hard at work. This pair is a mother and daughter team, both born and trained right here at the farm by the Stevenson family. Each horse weighs around 1800 pounds and is close in size to the famous Budweiser Clydesdales. While extremely powerful animals, our horses really are gentle giants.

To get the fields ready for planting, a variety of horse-drawn machines will be used. Besides the plow, we also use the harrow, disc, cultipacker, cultivator and of course, the planters. Each of these has a different function; breaking through last year's plant growth, breaking up large clods, planting seeds, pressing them gently into the soil, weeding between new rows of corn. Most

of the equipment will be used on each field being prepared, and some like the harrow or disc, will pass over the soil multiple times before the ground is ready to plant.

We get a lot of questions about how this process works, so Emily is working on another page to the website to showcase the equipment, with photos and descriptions. Our site already features a page devoted to why we choose to work horses and another page featuring the equipment and process of hay making with horses, which occurs later in the summer months.

We're very proud of our farming methods, so we encourage you to look over the information we have online. Please feel free to ask any questions you may have when you visit our stand!

CHANCES ARE, IF  
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SPRING, YOU'LL  
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