



Hello Friends!

The first week of December brought lots of snow to the farm, and it looks like winter has settled in. Although we're closed for the season, there is still lots of work to be done here! We were closed in December, but we were also busy filling all of our freezer pork orders. We're now done butchering until May, which is a welcome break. As the grass is done growing for the year and snow blankets the pastures and fields, the animals have been brought into the barn for the winter. While we let them out for a period of time each day for exercise, the horses and cows have gotten used to the cold weather routine. They are fed a diet of quality organic hay through the cold months. This hay was made right here on the farm during the summer using our horses and haymaking equipment. (For more details on how we do this, complete with pictures, check out the Hay Making page on our website, found under the Why Work Horses? link.) Making hay here at the farm gives us control over the quality of the feed our animals receive, as well as keeping our costs much lower over purchased feeds.

In addition to caring for the animals, we'll have some extra time to work on the buildings and indoor projects. It's also time to start planning for the garden for the upcoming season, which you can read all about on page 2. Emily continues to stay busy with her LocalHarvest blog and some new additions to the website. She's also begun preparing for an upcoming speaking event (see below)! We'll also soon be preparing for babies, as we begin hatching chicks and seeing new lambs arrive in March.

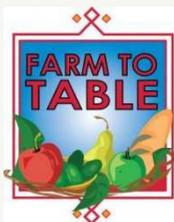
Wishing you and your family a healthy and happy New Year!

-Emily

See Emily at Farm to Table Expo 2011!

The 5th annual Farm to Table Expo will again be held at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center in Pittsburgh. It will be taking place Friday, March 25 & Saturday March 26 from 9-5 each day. There will also be a tasting event for local foods Friday evening.

The conference features an exhibit hall filled with



tables from local farms, wineries, restaurants and other groups who support local food. There will

also be a wide variety of speakers and demonstrations.

We are very excited to announce that Emily will be one of the featured speakers at the event! Her

presentation is titled "Heritage Livestock Breeds: What They Are, Why They Matter, and How to Find Them." You will also be able to visit with her in the exhibit hall.

Watch our website and Facebook page, as we will post more details as they become available. We hope some of you will stop and see Emily there!

**OUR FARM STAND
WILL REOPEN
SATURDAY, MAY 28,
2011.**

- ◆ Visit with us, see Emily speak and stock up on some of your favorite canned products at Farm to Table in March!
- ◆ Live chicks will again be available Spring 2011



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Although it seems like we just finished picking the last of the winter squash from the garden, it's already time to look ahead to our 2011 garden! While we do save our own seed from some crops, we purchase lots more each spring.

The seed catalogs have already started to arrive in the mailbox, and soon we'll get serious about comparing prices and looking at all the newly available varieties. Deciding which crops and what varieties to plant is a task we take our time with, since it will affect our entire season! We try to order from just a few companies who we've found to be reliable producers of quality seed, but we do get dozens of catalogs, and it's always interesting to flip through them all to see what catches our eye. The selections are impressive and can be a bit overwhelming at times; one catalog we use specializes in sweet corn and features over seventy different varieties of that crop alone!

How do we choose what to plant? If we went by the pic-

Garden Planning

tures and descriptions in the catalogs, we would never be able to narrow it down since it makes each one sound so good! One important factor is by keeping good records and knowing which varieties have done well on our farm in the past. We have many tried and true varieties that have grown well for us over the years. We also need to take into consideration the growing needs of the variety, as some do well in the zone we live in and others need different climate conditions than we have here. Also, different varieties take different amounts of time to produce fruit. By planting both early and late types of a particular veggie, like corn, we'll be able to offer it for a longer period of the season.

Another factor that can be important is a particular variety's natural resistance to specific diseases (especially if we had issues with that disease in the prior growing season). For instance, since late blight has affected so many local tomato crops the past 2 years, planting varieties with natural resistance

is important, especially since we never use chemical fungicides or other harmful sprays.

Each year we try to expand our heirloom offerings. When we do, we'll plant a proven variety or two along with a new or heirloom type of the same vegetable. If the new one does well, we'll add it to the list for future growing seasons. We are constantly experimenting with which heirlooms will give us the best results and flavors at our location. Also, sometimes a favorite variety is simply no longer available for one reason or another, and you need to choose another variety you hope will have similar performance. We'll let you know which heirloom varieties will be included in the 2011 garden in a future edition of this newsletter.

We do also try to take into consideration what our customers are asking for. If you were looking for a particular vegetable or variety but didn't see it for sale last year, feel free to let us know!



Don't forget to keep up with the farm all winter long by liking us on Facebook or reading up on our LocalHarvest blog!