



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

April 8, 2011



Spring Pasture Update

By Jim Munsch, Richard de Wilde & Andrea Yoder

As spring approaches, we eagerly await the arrival of our pigs and cows to graze and root our soon-to-be green pastures. We're excited to offer some new packages this year to better meet your needs. We've added 15# packages to many of our current offerings—same package contents, just a smaller portion that may fit better into a small refrigerator freezer; or maybe a more appropriate amount for households that eat less meat (and more vegetables!). We're also offering a 3-delivery and 5-delivery meat share option which includes both beef and pork. Check out our order form for package details.

Meat consumers today are bombarded with a host of terminology including "Natural," "Hormone-Free," "Antibiotic-Free," "Free-Range," "Grass-Fed," "Grain-Fed," "Organic," "Certified Organic," "Biodynamic" and on and on. Consumers who reject conventional feedlot methods for beef and pork production, but are looking for a source of responsibly raised meat are faced with a confusing set of choices. We think you should make your own informed decisions, so here is our philosophy and the methods we use for raising our cattle and pigs at Harmony Valley Farm.

Certified Organic.

100% Grass-Fed Beef:

Both our cattle and our pastures are certified organic. This year our certifying agency, MOSA, is offering a verification for 100% Grass-Fed Beef according to the USDA criteria. We are eligible to receive this verification when we have our on-site inspection this spring. Our practices are based on research done in the last decade that has shown meat from ruminants (cows) raised on grass, when compared to grain fed animals, has a more favorable balance of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids and is higher in CLA (conjugated linoleic acid). This translates to improved health benefits for humans that consume this meat.

Raising cattle on grass is also good for the cattle themselves. Cattle are the domesticated version of wild animals that evolved as grass eaters. They have a part of their digestive system called the rumen where bacteria break down cell walls of grass and leaves to release nutrients that nourish the animal. This mix of feed is the evolutionary balance point of the animal. Move off that balance point and the animal is stressed which challenges the immune system and the animal in general. Proof of the logic is in the well-being of our animals, with their very low incidence of the need for medical attention.

Raising cattle on a grass-based

system is good for the land as well. We raise vegetables on land with only a gentle slope and graze animals on our hillsides. By covering the erosion prone hillsides with pasture grasses we can prevent erosion and increase soil health with continual grass and legume cover and animals to fertilize it. By managing the land in this way, we are able to increase the nutrient content of the soil and thus the quality of our pastures.

Our use of certified organic methods AND 100% grass-fed production differentiates our beef from "grass-fed, natural" or "grass-fed, hormone-free." Organic systems prohibit antibiotics, growth hormones, other pharmaceutical growth promotants, chemical pesticides, toxic soil additives and other artificial substances. The organic rule also stipulates certain methods of production and animal welfare. Conversely, the designation of "natural" does not guarantee that any special production system is used or not used. The designation of "hormone-free" does not guarantee any substances except hormones are not used. Neither system involves outside verification.

By raising our animals in a low-stress environment, we eliminate the need for antibiotics. Pests such as flies and intestinal worms can be

New! Save when you join the HVF Meat Club!

Great for smaller freezers and lighter meat eaters!

Sign up for either three or 5 deliveries of smaller packages (15 lbs. each delivery) of our fresh frozen meat.

See our new Meat Order Form for more info!

<http://www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com/HVFMeatOrderForm.pdf>

handled with more gentle organic methods when the animals are healthy. We use a mixture of certified organic sunflower oil and citronella extract for controlling flies on our animals which in turn prevents the incidence of pink eye.

The certified organic method also applies to management of soils and crops. We do not use caustic fertilizers, chemical herbicides or pesticides in our pasture production. We do not raise or feed genetically engineered (GMO) crops including the recently approved GMO alfalfa.

Conventional beef production uses substances not permitted in organic production in order to reduce the cost of beef by accelerating the rate of weight gain. All of these tools cost money but in each case the increase in yield exceeds the cost of the input. Organic production is relatively more expensive because of the absence of the substances. Grass-Fed cattle gain weight more slowly than corn and soy finished beef.

We work with Jim & Phyllis Munsch, our close friends who own a cow-calf operation at their certified organic Deer Run Farm in Coon Valley, Wisconsin. They have managed a closed herd of Angus Beef cattle for over 30 years, refining the line of genetics to yield an animal that does well in a grazing system and produces a delicious, lean meat. The animals we raise come from Jim's herd at about one year of age (these are referred to as "feeder cattle".) They graze our pastures until the fall when they are harvested. Some animals are overwintered for our May and June deliveries. We do not have adequate facilities or stored forage necessary for overwintering animals. Thankfully, Jim & Phyllis are set up to overwinter animals and have the land to produce and bale hay to feed the animals throughout the winter. Animals that are delivered for May and June orders are overwintered at Deer Run Farm and remain 100% grass fed.

Certified Organic Pastured Pigs

Our pigs are managed in a certified organic system as well. They come to us in the spring at about 2 months of age. Pigs are not ruminants and do require grain as part of their diet. Our pigs root and roam in our pastures digging down to eat roots, acorns and whatever other goodies they find throughout the pasture. They also eat copious amounts of vegetable scraps from our packing shed. Spinach, tomatoes, lettuce, cabbage, peppers, squash, beets and parsnips are just a few of their favorites. We do feed them certified organic grain daily as well, however the amount they eat is only about 1/3 the grain required for confined animals to gain weight. Pigs raised on pasture and vegetables produce a tasty, yet lean pork.

We hope this information is helpful as you sift through the available options. We personally believe that Grass-Fed/Pastured Certified Organic meat is truly the best of both worlds and offers the greatest "peace-of-mind" for the consumer. If you have any further questions, please let us know. We'd love to be part of your family's mealtime this season!

**Join the HVF Meat Club
before June 1, 2011 and
SAVE!**

**Mention Coupon Code M00CLB
and take \$15 off the 5 Delivery
Meat Club (regular price \$665)
or \$5 off the 3 Delivery Meat Club
package (regular price \$375).**

**This is on top of the already low,
discounted prices on those
packages!**

**[http://www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com/
HVFMeatOrderForm.pdf](http://www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com/HVFMeatOrderForm.pdf)**

Offer expires June 1, 2011

•All animals, feed & land are **certified organic**.

•Animals are **pasture-raised**, free to roam, root and peacefully graze our lush hillsides.

•All beef are 100% **grass-fed** on mineral-rich pastures.

•All beef is **dry-aged** for 2 weeks prior to cutting to enhance flavor & tenderness.

•Our meat is processed at Lede-buhr Meat Processing, a **small-scale, family-owned and operated certified organic plant** with a USDA inspector on-site to inspect *each* animal. Every animal is **hand-cut** by professionals. Impressively clean! Our hams are processed at Premier Meats in Viroqua.

•All processed products are made with **organic ingredients** and are **free of nitrates and nitrites**. This includes our smoked hams & bacon as well as franks and specialty sausage products.

•All meat is fresh-frozen and promptly delivered to your neighborhood in a cooler.

•We now have 5 meat delivery dates each year! You can order a meat package for delivery in May, June, November, December or January.

•Our cows travel only 60 miles in their life. Our pigs travel just 100 miles.

We feel it is important to know where our food comes from and how it was raised. Thus, it is our goal to inform you about our products so you also can make informed decisions. Some of the key points about our meat products are listed here, but if you'd like to see the pastures and animals for yourself, we invite you to visit the farm. You are always welcome!