



The Baker Family: Tommy, Jessie with Timmy in arms, Sean and in front row Maddie, Emily and Gracie

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Day Springs Farm Offers Meat, Milk and So Much More

BY DULCY HOOPER
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Sean and Jessie Baker had a vision for Day Spring Farm.

“We wanted it to be based on the same ideas that farmers had hundreds of years ago,” Jessie said. “We wanted to humanely raise the finest animals that produce the best meat, and to then provide that meat for family, friends and neighbors.”

Day Spring Farm in Middleburg is a family owned and operated grass-based farm producing organic beef and lamb, non-GMO fed pastured pork and chickens, eggs, vegetables grown without chemicals, herbal products, dairy shares and other organic foods. And just in time for Thanksgiving, the farm offers pasture-raised turkeys, raised much the same way as the pasture-raised chickens.

Jessie Baker, whose parents, Rick and Karen Lowe, run Lowlands Farm next door, said that she “grew up in the herb garden” with her mother. “In fact herbs – they were sort of my first language.”

The Bakers produce soap with lard from the pigs they raise, and recently made a first effort at making soap using milk from their goats. They also offer classes on how to use herbs and have yarn and wool items made from the sheared wool of their own sheep.

“Our sheep make beautiful wool,” Jessie said. “We sell it in many forms, such as roving, yarn, socks, raw wool or even sheep skins.”

Day Spring operates as a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture). “Most people know about vegetable CSAs,” Jessie said. “But we have meat CSAs as well. It’s like becoming partners with your farmer.”

Through Community Supported Agriculture, Day Spring offers a “share” of what is produced on the farm, with members purchasing a subscription in return for receiving meat or other products every month. When the couple’s children were young, the Bakers decided that they wanted fresh milk, which led to Day Spring Farm’s raw milk share program, providing unpasteurized milk from five Jersey cows for approximately 70 families. Customers purchase a share, or part of a cow, and pay a fee to Day Spring Farm for boarding and other costs.

Jessie had been a vegetarian for ten years, but following the birth of the couple’s first child, Sean suggested the possibility of raising their own meat. “The thought of eating meat

humanely raised and slaughtered seemed okay to me,” she said. “We allow the cows to graze naturally, the way they were designed to eat.”

The Bakers do not give their cows hormones, chemicals or unnecessary antibiotics. They eat grass and are supplemented with hay during winter. “By allowing the cows to graze and not be in a confined situation, they live a more stress-free life.”

The animals are kept on pasture.

“Because of that,” Jessie said, “they don’t get sick very often. When they do, we treat them naturally, with herbs, the same as we would ourselves.”

The couple embraced farm life “pretty quickly,” Jessie said. “It just felt right to grow food for ourselves and our families and neighbors. We think it’s important to eat more seasonally, and that is what we focus on.”

Instrumental to the running of the farm are guard dogs Rothy and Buster, who keep deer from gobbling up the bountiful gardens. Just as importantly, the specially-trained dogs keep foxes, raccoons and other predators away from the chickens.

Several years ago, Day Spring Farm was featured on Emeril Lagasse’s “Emeril Green” show for a Thanksgiving special. The episode highlighted the pasture-based farm and heritage turkeys – two of which were roasted by Jessie and Chef Emeril during the filming at Whole Foods in Fair Lakes.

Sean and Jessie Baker’s five children range in age from one to 16. The family cares for the animals together and the Bakers are committed to home-schooling their children. On a recent visit, one of the daughters was bottle-feeding a young (and enthusiastic) miniature donkey.

“Our biggest desire is to have a relationship with our customers,” Jessie said.

On a recent weekend, Zack and Amber Condry and their two young daughters came to the farm. The couple started as CSA customers and quickly became friends with the owners. In fact, they provide a pick-up spot in Vienna so that Day Spring Farm’s CSA members who live closer to that area can pick up their shares.

“Sustainable agriculture ensures that our children and grandchildren will have good farmland left to raise food for their friends and families,” Jessie said. “That’s what really matters the most to us.”

Day Spring Farm is located at 21388 Step-toe Hill Road in Middleburg. The website is www.dayspringfarmva.com. ■