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BAYFIELD FOODS CSA

Community Supported Agriculture



Griggs Cattle Company - Featured in Agri-View

TOBY & PAM GRIGGS - GRIGGS CATTLE CO.

This week, we would like to share an article that was written about our farm by Jason Maloney for Agri-View, a newspaper publication that focuses on Wisconsin agriculture. Enjoy!

CHALLENGES DONT KILL STRONG SPIRIT

We all know life is unpredictable. Sometimes it's downright difficult. What we do during and after the difficult patches is a reflection of the soul, the spirit. Some folks give up. Others have a spirit that is indomitable; those souls find a way to move forward and make the world better. They find meaning in life - and they work hard at it.

Griggs Cattle Company is on 130 acres of beautiful grassland and forest a few miles from Lake Superior just south of Ashland. On a summer day Toby Griggs paused to reflect on working to make his world better.

"We started this operation in late-summer 2009," he said. "My wife had passed away from breast cancer; I was trying to figure out what to do with the rest of my life.

"I had always wanted to get into farming and ranching. I have a biology degree from Colgate University, I spent 26 years in the Marines, and I owned and operated a computer store for 14 years. I sold the store just before my wife passed away.

"I went to Montana where I have cousins (but) the price of land there was sky-high. I had other relatives who had a place in Cable, Wisconsin. I started looking for land here in northern Wisconsin. The first guy I contacted was Jason Fischbach, the Ashland County agriculture agent. He introduced me to some folks; one was a grass-fed-beef farmer near Marengo, Wisconsin.

"I listened to what (the beef farmer) had to say. And from an ergonomic, agricultural and humanitarian point of view I thought that it was something that is a good deal. Feed cattle grass, not artificial products. Grow them until they are ready to be harvested and sell the beef.

"So I bought this farm and that's what I did. I bought cattle and converted the farm to grass-fed-beef operations. Here we are 11 years later and we are doing pretty well.

"We established a cow-calf herd and grew the herd to around 60 animals. In the last year I have cut the quantity back to about 30 brood cows. In the past year and a half I have decided to convert it to a feeder operation, still 100 percent grass-fed. I'm in the process of culling my cows, and processing and selling steers and heifers.

"Back in 2013 I joined the Bayfield Foods Co-op. We are one of three beef producers for the co-op; it keeps me quite busy. We have weekly meat boxes going out during the summer season. In the offseason we have around two shipments of beef to customers each month."

The first four years Griggs practiced rotational grazing, with daily movement of his cattle from paddock to paddock.

"I came to the conclusion that it was a lot of extra work," he said. "Each of our paddocks is a different size. I know the sizes of the paddocks and I know about how many days it takes before I move the cattle. I see them every day; we check the grass every day. Water, mineral and fences are checked every day. We go through the pastures and look at what percentage is eaten. I let them eat around 80 percent and then move them to the next paddock. They are free to go where they want within a paddock. It's a pretty smooth operation."



Red Devon cattle graze on pasture at Griggs Cattle Co, Devon are an ancient breed of cattle from the southwestern English county of Devon.



Solar panels generate about 75% of the electricity at Griggs Cattle Co.

The extra time he gained by phasing out daily cattle movements he fills with other farm work.

"I work six or seven hours a day at farm work," he said. "The rest of the day is bookwork for the farm or volunteer work I'm involved in. It's very busy."

Griggs is married to Pam now. The farm produces food for the community in a humane way. If one catches him standing still and he's asked, he might talk about his life as a Marine pilot in Vietnam, or his career flying all around the world after his military service. He speaks of his children, adventures and hardships all in a matter-of-fact way.

"That's my life; that's how it is," he said. Some folks are insecure and have a need to boast. Others like Toby Griggs have done amazing things but one might never hear about them.

People around Chequamegon Bay in far-northern Wisconsin know great grass-fed beef comes from the Griggs Cattle Company. An indomitable spirit has made it so.



Polo the farm cat stretches out for a photo op.



Picturesque haybales stacked & ready to use.

Dijon Maple Green Beans

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 1/2 lbs fresh green beans, trimmed
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 shallot, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- dash of red pepper

DIJON MAPLE SAUCE

- 1 teaspoon Heritage Acres maple syrup
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 2 teaspoons balsamic vinegar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper

GARNISH

- 1/3 cup roasted nuts of your choice, chopped or to taste
- 1/4 cup Fred's Fancy Feta
- 6-8 slices bacon, crumbled

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. In a small bowl, mix together the Dijon Maple Sauce ingredients. Set aside.
2. Blanch green beans in a large stock pot of salted boiling water for 2 minutes. Drain and transfer beans to a large bowl of ice water.
3. Melt butter over medium heat in a large skillet. Add shallots, garlic and red pepper flakes and saute for 1 minute. Add beans and Dijon Maple Sauce and continue to saute until beans are evenly coated in the sauce and beans and cooked to desired crisp-tenderness.
4. Taste and season with additional red pepper flakes and freshly cracked salt and pepper to taste. Garnish with caramelized pecans, bacon and Feta.

