

My MN Farmer

Our Family Blessed
To Feed Yours

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Flashback! 10 years ago at My Minnesota Farmer



2009: 10 years ago, Sam, Lucas and Abby greeted a new baby calf during the first summer season at My Minnesota Farmer.

2019 marks My Minnesota Farmer's 10-year Anniversary.

The Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model has allowed our family to live our dream to provide our members locally- and organically-grown produce and meat. Our mission is to be good stewards of the earth through responsible organic farming practices. Included in our mission is the desire to raise our children on a farm and provide their education in a Christian homeschool environment while nurturing a strong work ethic.

This week we've spent some time thinking about how My Minnesota Farmer (and our family) has changed over the last 10 years. Here are a few examples:

Kids: When we started our business in February of 2009, we had four children, ages 4, 3, 3, and 2. We now have seven children, ages 15, 14, 14, 12, 9, 7 and 4.

Acreage: In 2009 we farmed on just two acres. These two acres started as grass which we tilled up with a walk-behind tiller. We now grow on 8 acres and in 14 high tunnels.

Livestock: In 2009 we raised 7 cows; we now have 80. In our first year we raised 300 broiler chickens; we now raise about 1,000 each year. In 2009 we had 100 laying hens; we now have 400. In addition to our layers, we custom raise 1,500 laying hens for people who want to purchase new layers each spring. We did not raise pork, turkey or lamb our first several years, but we now raise between 12 and 20 pigs and 75 to 100 turkeys each year. We recently purchased 11 more sheep, bringing our total to 48 ewes plus some lambs and a ram. And farm cats? When we started our business we had one Calico that walked onto our farm and made herself at home. Now there are too many to count, and we just had another batch of 6 kittens. In 2009, our farm dog was a very sweet white labrador named Emma. She passed several years ago, and now we enjoy the company of our American Shepherd puppy Diesel.

Farm Equipment: We started with one piece of "farm equipment" - a walk-behind tiller. We now operate our business with four tractors, a water wheel transplanter, a potato digger, a 6-foot tiller, a manure spreader, a regi-weeder, a mulch layer and an undercutter.

Buildings: In 2009 we had a granary and a big shed. We would pack share boxes in our garage and wash eggs in our kitchen. In 2016 we built a pack shed that includes a huge packing area, an egg washer, a vegetable washer, a full kitchen, a bathroom, Dean's office, and living quarters for WWOOFers. Over the last several years we have also built a livestock pavilion, a small walk-in cooler, a big walk-in cooler, a greenhouse and the 14 high tunnels.

Freezers: In 2009 we used two chest freezers for chicken and meat. We now have 10 chest freezers, one which resides on the box truck that we drive to farmers markets.

Employees: In 2009, when we started My Minnesota Farmer, Dean was working full time as the Business Systems Manager for Brown Printing in Waseca. I stayed home and worked our new baby business with our four kids ages 4, 3, 3, and 2. (I'd previously taught elementary school for four years in the Jordan and Le Center School Districts.) Dean worked full-time for Brown Printing until 2012 when our business grew to the point that he could make the move to full-time farming. In 2009 we started My Minnesota Farmer with two employees - my niece Sarah and a neighbor's son. Through the years we have had as many as 9 employees each year, but now, as our children have grown and we work with the WWOOF program, we have no employees. It should be noted, however, that we have several faithful friend and family volunteers who are an integral part of the success of our business.

Members: In 2009, our CSA had 75 members. We now have 125 members and work four farmers markets each week throughout the growing season.

As we look back over the last 10 years we are thankful for the many ways we've been blessed, and we offer a hearty **THANK YOU** to all our members and farmers market customers for your support in growing our family business.



2019: 10 years later, Abby, Lucas and Sam pose with one of My Minnesota Farmers 80 beef cattle.

In your share box this week

- ❖ **Tomatoes** - Slice up these last few late-season tomatoes in sandwiches or salads, add them to a hotdish recipe, or freeze for future use.



- ❖ **Kale** - Kale is great in salads, kale chips, or as a healthy addition to your fruit smoothie. Or saute it lightly in olive or coconut oil and add a dash of apple cider vinegar for a tasty side dish.



- ❖ **Summer Squash or Zucchini** - As the Zucchini and Summer Squash get bigger, shred these squash for sweet breads or muffins.



- ❖ **Cucumbers** - CSA members and market shoppers tell us they are still making delicious cucumber salads, refrigerator pickles and cucumber sandwiches.



- ❖ **Mixed Peppers** - You'll find Bell Peppers and/or Hot Peppers in your box. Grill with potatoes and onions, or freeze for casseroles and chili.



- ❖ **Pea Tendrils, Radishes or Spinach**

- We are having a limited yield of these crops, so you will find one or two of them in your share box. Pea Tendrils can be eaten raw, cut up for a salad, or sauteed and added to any dish to



which you'd like to add sweet pea flavor. We are still harvesting some Radishes, and Spinach can be used to complement your salad or sandwich.



- ❖ **New England Pie Pumpkin** - Pie pumpkins are

smaller in shape and size than jack-o-lantern pumpkins. These small, round pie pumpkins are packed full of flesh that is good for cooking. The pulp has a better texture (less stringy) and is sweeter. The size of this pumpkin makes it perfect for decorating, too.



Make your own Pumpkin Puree - Easiest Method

1. Cut top off pumpkin to create flat top.
2. Place pumpkin on flat (cut) side and cut pumpkin in half.
3. Scoop out seeds
4. Put 1 to 1-½ cups of water in the bottom of a crock pot - just enough to keep pumpkin moist. Don't submerge pumpkin pieces in water.
5. Cook pumpkin halves in crockpot on high for 3 to 4 hours. You can cut halves into quarters to make more pumpkin fit in the crock pot, if desired.
6. Once pumpkin is soft (poke with fork to check), take out of pot and set on a cookie sheet or tray to cool.
7. When pumpkin has cooled enough to handle, use a spoon to remove pumpkin pulp from skin.
8. Place pumpkin pulp in a mixing bowl and blend with an immersion blender or potato masher to reduce lumps. If the pumpkins are good pie pumpkins, very little blending/mashing should be necessary to make a nice smooth puree.
9. Freeze pumpkin puree in amounts needed for favorite recipes.



Grandma's Pumpkin Bread

3-½ c. flour	1 c. canola oil
2 tsp. baking soda	4 eggs, slightly beaten
1-½ tsp. salt	¾ c. water
1 tsp. cinnamon	2 c. pumpkin puree
1 tsp. nutmeg	
3 c. sugar	
1 c. chopped pecans (if desired)	

Mix dry ingredients together in a large bowl. Make a well in the mixture. Mix wet ingredients and combine with dry ingredients until smooth. Grease and flour two 9x5 loaf pans. Bake at 350 degrees for one hour. Check with a toothpick after one hour. Continue baking until toothpick comes out clean.

Now we're cookin'!



Fall, football and the school year starting means that Thanksgiving is just around the corner. Have you ordered your Thanksgiving turkey yet? Call us now while we still have a few available! Our organically-grown turkeys cost \$3.25 per pound. Your fresh - never frozen - turkey will be delivered to your home on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving for a \$5 delivery charge. You can also pick up your bird at the farm on the Sunday afternoon or Monday before Thanksgiving. To order your Thanksgiving turkey, text Farmer Jean at 612-245-6271 or email csa@mymnfarmer.com.