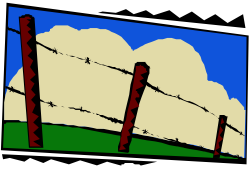


Mossback Farm News

March 2011

Vol. 9 No. 1



Greetings from the farm!

I hope that the past year was a good one for you and your family. We had a busy year, and are excited to be planning for 2011.

2010 was pretty peaceful (apart from the chaos that comes at times from living with a 3 year old boy!) We finished off our "Wild Bunch" of steers, started a new, much more mellow group of steers, offered several shares of "Neighborly" beef in both spring and autumn, completed the ram pump water system in our main pasture, finished a large chunk of fencing, and also completed rebuilding our back deck.

Our "Wild Bunch" of steers are the ones that escaped several times last year when we first got them. They definitely were a bit more spirited than some, but proved to be a good group in the end. We learned a lot of valuable lessons, including that it helps to visit the steers several times before bringing them home. Our current group is super mellow, with none of the breaking out tendencies of our last group. Thank goodness!

One of our bigger projects of 2010 was digging a 800 foot long trench for a water pipe to connect the ram pump in our forest with our big water tank in our main pasture. We rented a trencher, installed the pipe, filled in the trench (Dalton, our young son, was rather helpful with this, and enjoyed seeing all the earthworms.) Now we no longer have to pump water from the house over to the tank... we can pump it directly from the seasonal creek. Rich compiled a video about the ram pump, and talks more about it later in this newsletter.

Completing our cross fencing was another big project. It's wonderful to have that done because it means that moving the steers is a lot easier than it used to be. This is important because we firmly believe that it's critical to rotate the steers from one pasture to the next on a very rapid schedule, particularly in spring when the grass growth is extreme.

Rich worked hard this summer on our house's back deck. Construction is not one of his favorite things, but the deck -- badly damaged in the 2009 snow storm -- is now a thing of beauty. The roof actually covers the whole deck (the prior owners and deck builders didn't seem to think that was necessary!), and the deck will provide a lovely shaded space for this summer's heat.

A few losses and changes to note. The saddest is that Rich's Grandma Lorene passed away a few days before Christmas. Rich posted a nice remembrance on our blog [here](#).

We had to put our dog Boomer to sleep in early February. He was getting on in years, and becoming rather feeble and senile, so it was clearly time to let him go. He was a bit of a handful at times over the years, but was a good watch dog and a fine farm companion, especially during his last several years. We'll miss our Boo.

Farm visitors may remember Val pointing out her favorite locust tree in our front yard. It lost a large limb during a storm this fall, and had to be cut back severely since it was no longer structurally sound. We got some good firewood out of the limbs, and are hoping for it to spring back into the shady summer paradise that it has granted us in the past.

And lastly, Val completed her 3 year stint on the board of the **Oregon Farmers' Markets Association** (1 year as president). It was a good run, and she'll still be involved in special projects with the organization, but she's now looking forward to concentrating on her music...more on that later.

Mossback Farm Update – 2011 Plans



This year, we're hoping to complete the barn expansion we started in 2010. We'd like to have a bit more space for the steers during the winter. Also, we need space to shelter a new (used!) farm acquisition... our first tractor!

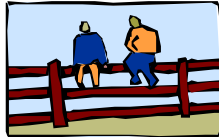
People are often amazed to find that we've been farming for 10 years without a tractor. We've managed to get by with just renting or borrowing one, once or twice a year. But getting a used tractor will allow Rich to complete many more projects, in a much more timely manner, and without some of the scheduling hassles involved with having to plan around work, weather, daycare, etc.

We'd like to thank all of you who continue to support our farm in your food purchases despite all the uncertainties of the economy. We appreciate everyone who votes to support local with their dollars!

Farm Musings:

Water, water...everywhere?

by Rich Blaha



Any conversation we have here on the farm inevitably turns to water. While we are blessed with abundant rainfall, most of the 50" that we receive come in the fall and winter months, when we need it least. We capture some of this in our roof and pasture tank, but it's a small proportion of what we get, and an even smaller proportion of what we could use come those scorching August days.



Last year we made a large leap in our summer water capacity with the installation of our ram pump, along with some of the initial piped distribution. This gravity powered pump taps our most perennial waterway, and last year (an admittedly wet year) allowed us to finish out the spring grazing season (end of June) with 2 full 1550 gal storage tanks, with plenty to spare.

This year, we'll connect one of the tanks directly to the pump, and distribute water from the tank at the top of our property to permanent water points in all of the pastures. Summer water (along with barn capacity and a tractor for hauling hay, mentioned on the first page) have long been our limiting production factor, so addressing this opens up some significant possibilities for our farm into the future. We look forward to sharing what we come up with!



On the topic of water (I told you I could yammer on about this...), putting in the trench for the initial feeder waterline gave us some interesting insights into the effect that our grazing rotations are having on our soils. Our fences make pretty good control points to observe the effect that grazing vs. livestock exclusion has on our soils. Even with our small, but intensively grazed herd, the soil coloration was significantly darker in the pastures where we have been grazing. The pastures, compared to the conservation / reforested acres, were much darker in color, indicating a higher organic matter content. This stable soil carbon stores nutrients for release during the lean months, and helps the soil to act as a sponge during the rainy ones. There is a lot of potential for us to offset our species' fossil fuel carbon output by sequestering this carbon in our soils and putting it to good use growing food.

Resources: *Whole Animal Buying Guide*

We're including the link again this year because we think it's an excellent resource for people interested in buying larger quantities of meat.

www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM2076.pdf



Beef Shares for 2011

We are currently taking orders for 2011 beef shares. As a courtesy to our 2010 customers, we offered them first chance to place orders. As of mid-March, it looks like we are sold out of the Premium summer shares. This could change if we have any cancellations, so if you're interested in a Premium summer share, contact us right away to get on our waiting list. We apologize to those of you who were hoping for the summer beef... we're planning to increase our offerings over the next few years, so hopefully more of the demand for our beef.

We do expect to have some shares of the Fall Neighborly beef available, so if you're interested in that, please contact us to place a reservation. We won't know the total number of shares available until summer, so we won't request deposits until then. Because the price of feeder cattle is rising, we have yet to confirm our price for the Fall beef, but it will be between \$3.50-\$3.75.

- 1) "Premium" Mossback Farm beef shares (July): \$4/lb (orders after 3/10/11; currently sold out)
- 2) "Neighborly" Autumn beef shares (Oct): \$3.50-\$3.75/lb
- 3) "Neighborly" Ground beef shares (~1-3x/year, depending on availability): \$2.75/lb

Butcher charges are in addition to the per pound price listed for each option, and usually run about \$90-125 per quarter, depending on the hanging weight.

Mossback Farm online...

We update our blog at www.mossbackfarm.com once or twice a month with posts about the farm, or other agriculture or food-related information. You might consider adding us to your RSS feed if you want to stay informed.

We have recently been pretty good about updating little features of farm life (that tend to be too short for the blog) on our somewhat new Facebook page. If you're a Facebook user, consider joining the Mossback Farm [Facebook page](#).

If you have any suggestions (topics you'd like to see covered, links to other sites, or just general questions), please feel free to drop us a line at info@mossbackfarm.com.

Meet Some Friends...

This is the section of our newsletter where we try to connect our customers up with friends who have interesting food/farm businesses. This past year we didn't meet any new local farmers, but we did grow in our appreciation for the town of McMinnville, and the wonderful food and wine available there.



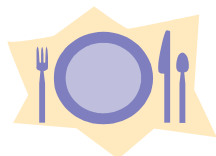
R. Stuart Wine Bar (www.rstuartandco.com)

Rob and Maria Stuart own this wonderful little wine bar/tasting room. I performed there one recent evening, and the aroma of the food (mostly light appetizers) had me drooling into the microphone. And the wine... if you are fond of excellent red wines, you won't be disappointed.

Crescent Cafe (503 435 2655) We don't personally know the owners of this wonderful breakfast/lunch cafe, but we do appreciate their attention to detail. Everything is homemade, from the berry jam to the bread and biscuits. Menus change frequently but always include fresh, locally-sourced and delicious ingredients.

Red Fox Bakery (redfoxbakery.com) Laurie and Jason are an amazing team, creating some of the best breads and pastries in town, and also offering a wonderful selection of lunch sandwiches. Sandwiches come with a macaroon... one of my favorite guilty pleasures!

Grass-fed Beef Recipes: *Meatloaf??!*



Ah, meatloaf. Loved by some, maligned by others. It can be difficult to find someone who gets excited about meatloaf, but folks, look no further! I have perfected a meatloaf recipe that gets great reviews (around my house!) Served with mashed potatoes and salad, it should be a crowd pleaser.

ingredients:

- 1 package ground beef
- ~1-2 C bread crumbs
- 1 small onion, diced
- 3-5 garlic cloves, minced
- 5-10 mushrooms, chopped fine
- 1/4 to 1/3 C grated Romano or Parm. cheese
- herbs (Italian seasoning, or herbs like basil, oregano)
- ~2-4 Tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 egg
- ~4-5 strips bacon (uncooked)

Mix everything except the bacon. Put mixture into a loaf pan, and lay bacon strips across the top, slightly overlapping. Make a foil tent for the pan. (I do this by putting the pan on top of 2 pieces of foil, then folding the foil up and crimping edges together, leaving about a 1 to 2 inch opening on top... enough for steam to come out, but not so much that the grease will splatter in your oven. Bake at 375F for 75 minutes. Check temperature with meat thermometer, and let sit about 10 minutes before serving.



Mossback Music

Val has been very busy with music practice and performance over the past year. She performed on piano in April in the inaugural concert of the Oregon Mandolin Orchestra. She also played several gigs with her band **Top Hands**, including at the Beaverton Farmers' Market and Zippy's Pizza in Yamhill. Most recently she performed solo at a wine bar in McMinnville, and with Top Hands at the Pelican Pub and Brewery in Pacific City. To contact her about playing at your event, visit www.valblaha.com.



*Wishing you and your family
good health and good eating!*

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