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# WORKING TOWARDS A HEALTHY BALANCE AT WHOLE CIRCLE FARM

BY BRYAN DYCK

On the divide where Halton and Wellington regions meet, Whole Circle Farm sits nestled, its pastures and fields running into the surrounding wood. If the small plotted fields don't give away the property's 100-plus years, the circa-1882 farmhouse and rebuilt bank barn provide evidence. Breeze over the gap in time from the farm's origins to present day, and a couple of throwbacks to farming practices of yesterday – diversity and localism – still remain at Whole Circle Farm: diversity in land type, crops grown, and animals reared; localism in what comes into the farm and what goes out.

Adhering to biodynamic practices, the farm attempts to create a closed loop system where fertility is produced on site, herbal preparations are used to enliven the soil and to remedy any imbalances, and forest and pasture are interspersed to allow for a natural system to form and thrive. A large portion of the farm is grass-based, grasses being sustenance for its cattle, providing the natural fertility to be turned into compost – the key to the health and vitality of the farm. The idea is to find a healthy balance between how many animals the farm can support, and how many are necessary to generate adequate fertility.

Along with the aforementioned pastured beef, the farm produces pastured Tamworth pork, eggs from free-ranging hens, and a wide variety of grain (spelt, rye, wheat, oats and barley to name a few). A large part

of the income for the farm comes from over six acres of market garden that supplies the 100-plus-member CSA program, the farm's Georgetown Farmers' Market stall, and Artisanale Restaurant in Guelph.

While a major focus of the farm is to localize inputs, providing the surrounding community with what we produce is just as important. To close the gap between grower and consumer, a CSA (community supported agriculture) program was started five years ago, providing people in the area with access to diverse organically grown vegetables cultivated by people who value healthy soil and farm accordingly. Along with their weekly pick-up of veggies, the share members are encouraged to spend time at the farm visiting the animals, talking with the farmers, and helping out in the garden. With this honest, open relationship we can ensure that both the growers and the members are up to date with each other's concerns, thus strengthening the community and providing the basis on which a bright future can flourish.

Johann and Maggie Kleinsasser, the farm's modern-day stewards, have spent the past eight years on the property building their vision and living out their dreams. It is easy to sense the passion they have for what they do and their commitment to growing healthy food and connecting with the people they supply it to. Their endeavour to grow biodynamically – to awaken the soil to produce food full of vitality while nurturing spirit, mind and body – is complemented by their efforts to awaken the potential in many burgeoning new farmers, as well. Indeed, it is hard to tell whether their youthful exuberance is all of their own accord, or comes from a symbiosis between them and the interns and young farmers they mentor.

Photo courtesy of Whole Circle Farm



