

Farm and Fable Musings

Farm

Punk Turkeys and Marbles

The first batch of turkeys for Thanksgiving arrived last week. They were sent in a box from Iowa to the East Meredith post office. The first morning call is the postmaster pleading with us to pick them up immediately because the chirping is deafening. Because we calendar the turkey's arrival dates, their first home is ready for them. It is a large, enclosed, outside pen lined with a metal pan and covered with a net. The metal pan prevents minks, skunks, weasels and rats from digging through the bottom and eating the chicks. The nets prevent the horned owls and hawks from airborne dining. The pen is equipped with waterers, heat lamps and a thick bed of shavings. The feed trays and waterers are overflowing with marbles because turkeys are so mentally challenged (a la really stupid) that the marbles attract them to the water and food so they don't starve. The first batch of turkeys were stupider than usual, and dove into the waterers and were soaked. The temperatures at night have been cool, so a wet turkey at night is a dead turkey by day break. Katey brought 15 turkeys into the house and used her hairdryer to blow them dry. Each bird emerged from their styling session with a mohawk of yellow fuzz. Very chic. Very punk.

The Now you See him, Now you Don't Goat

We brought a couple of lambs and a wether (castrated male goat) to Steiner's last week to be slaughtered. The goat escaped through a narrow opening in the trailer door. He fled to the river and the train tracks. If the goat had been a bottle baby, he would have come to us when we called, but this goat was nursed by his mom and we never interacted with him. Steiner's received numerous phone calls complaining that the goat was wandering around the village of Otego grazing on lawns, gardens and rummaging through compost piles. Each time we arrived in Otego, the goat was nowhere to be seen. The state police reported that the goat was spotted trying to break down the church door. By the time the state police arrived, the goat, who was not ramming a door but grazing on the lawn, scooted into the bushes. I asked the state policeman for advice on how to catch the goat. He said that the goat was dangerous and should be shot but guns were not allowed to be used in the village of Otego. I explained that he was a wether and that he was docile. (Both words wether and docile had to be explained to the officer.) He suggested lassoing the goat. If anyone knows of a cowboy who can spend a week parked in the village of Otego with a lasso in hopes of roping the roaming goat, please let us know. Tom suggested using another goat as bait to lure him into a cage. We are open to suggestions as to how to catch a goat, so send them to us please!

The Pigs are Out and I am out in my Nightgown

I woke up the other morning to a very loud snorting, snoring sound. After checking to see if Tom was snoring his morning away, I quickly discovered a passel of pigs in our side yard heading for the garden. I spend hours in the garden and it is a major source of our food. Ten pigs can destroy a garden in 10 seconds. I am afraid of pigs. Everyone in the family teases me about my fear of pigs. The thought of an overrun and rototilled garden outweighed my pig fear. I dashed to the garden, shouted and wildly swung my arms. The boar turned on me and I pitched rocks at him to shoo him away and into the gate. As I stood scantily clad in the road, the Kortright highway crew made their way toward me. I finished putting the pigs in the gate and strutted across the road to the house pretending as if chasing a pig in a negligee is a common event.

Fable

Last week's Fable dinner was masterfully orchestrated by neighbor and beekeeper Mark Vamos. The country pâté was a wonderful blend of lamb, veal and pork. The mustard sauce, made from local, over ripe peaches was tart and sweet. The starter began as turnip soufflé. However, the turnips, even after cooking for an hour, were rock hard. We scrapped the turnips and recruited the crew to picking and shucking peas and turned the turnip soufflé into pea and cheese soufflé. The color, a creamy chartreuse, was almost as spectacular as the light cheese flavor. We mixed together a salad of field greens that included bitter greens and dressed them with a honey vinaigrette to create a play of sweet and sour. The main course, smoked ham, was topped with sour cherry sauce. I picked the sour cherries from Mark's trees and spiced them with sweet herbs and a sweet red wine from the Fingerlakes.

The dessert was Mark's creation. Using our raspberry goat milk yogurt, Mark whipped together a creamy frozen goat milk yogurt drizzled with basil strawberry coulis. Divine.

Mark has created and will be cheffing the dinner on August 2. The menu will be gazpacho, gnocci with rabbit ragu, roast kid goat, gratin of summer vegetables and mixed baby greens with shallot vinaigrette and a rustic fruit tart with goat milk ice cream.

We are looking forward to the July 26th Meet the Farmer Dinner. Lucky Dog Farm owners Richard Giles and Holly White will join us to talk about their farm and life. The menu, which includes dishes made with organic vegetables from Lucky Dog, can be found on our website at <http://www.stoneandthistlefarm.com/FableMenu.doc>

Best wishes from Tom, Denise, Katey and Shane and a special hello from Riley in Washington D.C.