



EDITOR'S COLUMN

"Celebrating its food-farm connections, Hidden Bounty features the Marin community gastronomic players in their glory and drama. This visual representation of the emotions, economics, and ecology that drive local food success leaves the viewer hopeful and empowered. Few foodsheds have been as progressive as Marin in connecting all the dots - watch and learn."

- Joel Salatin, Polyface Farm

Seven years ago we launched a little effort called "Grown in Marin," to continue the efforts of many farmers, ranchers, and sustainable agriculture advocates, in bringing together and supporting all farmers in Marin County. It has been a team effort, and everyone involved has contributed way beyond the call of duty, to ensure that our local agriculture and food system thrive.

This documentary is, in some ways, the dessert of this work. We have tried to stay true to the heart and spirit of our agricultural community in bringing these nine short stories to you in this half-hour, high-definition documentary.

The crew at Novato Public Access Television has worked tirelessly with us to film, edit, and produce this amazing piece of history.

Our film is dedicated to all farmers and ranchers, past, present, and future.



Hidden Bounty of Marin: FARM FAMILIES IN TRANSITION

Photo Video Captures by Dave Fix

Marin County is an extraordinary place with an extraordinary community of farmers and ranchers. Traditional cattle, dairy, and sheep ranchers blend with oyster farmers, cheese makers, and vegetable producers. Marin dairies provide 20% of the Bay Area's milk. Meat, shellfish, and organic row crops are produced for local and regional markets.

An exciting transformation is taking place here. This documentary brings us close in to the lives and work of nine farm families in transition. High-definition video captures the rich landscape and daily life on the farms and ranches in this half-hour documentary. Under production for over a year, this video captures "farming on the edge" in Marin, revealing the depth of commitment and passion of the real "Hidden Bounty of Marin," the farmers and ranchers who bring us high quality, local, and organic food.

The following excerpts have been taken from the documentary:

Jensen Ranch, Tomales

Bill Jensen is a fourth-generation sheep rancher. *"We like to think that this is a good product out here because it's basically all raised in native grasses. It's not fed anything, there is no hormones that go into these animals whatsoever. It's about as raw and basic a product as you could ever get. It has never changed. It has ... we are not doing anything to these animals now ... that wasn't done 100 years ago."* - Bill Jensen



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Clark Summit Farm, Tomales

Liz Cunningham was born and raised on the family farm. This is a small farm that maximizes its natural resources and operates on the simplest principles of letting the livestock live natural lives. *"We keep it really humane for our animals so they are not getting in big scary trucks and going long distances to be processed, and it's worked out well. People really, really like what they see when they come, and*

they are really happy to purchase our products, and it's a lot of fun. We learn a lot from our customers. People know a lot about their food." - Liz Cunningham

This is the kind of personal relationship that people used to have with their food and the farmers who grow it. Knowing the farmer is perhaps the most authentic kind of "certification" we can have as a community.



Hog Island Oyster Company

Farming in Marin also happens on the tidelands of Tomales Bay & Drakes Estero. Oysters have been farmed in Tomales Bay since 1875. The industry ranks third in Marin production value behind dairy and livestock, and second in the state. John Finger and Terry Sawyer run Hog Island Oyster Company farming oysters on Tomales Bay. *"I've been at this for 24 years and there are always new challenges. There are different conditions out here and you are dealing with Mother Nature and it's never going to be easy to grow oysters. I knew that getting into it and 24 years*

later I'm still saying the same thing. The customers support us so that we can sell our product at a good price locally, and ... [it] is huge in terms of survivorship of agriculture, especially in this county." - John Finger

Gale Ranch, Chileno Valley

Mike and Sally Gale inherited Chileno Valley Ranch in 1993 from Sally's aunt, a member of the sprawling Dolcini family. New and returning farmers like the Gales are essential to the agricultural diversification happening in West Marin.



"The culture that has grown up here is alive and well, but it won't continue without the support of consumers.

We are very appreciative of local customers who support us and support our family farms. Without our customers we can't survive." - Sally Gale



Straus Family Dairy & Creamery

No other kind of Marin agriculture has been more successful than our bountiful and productive dairy farms. Some of the most productive dairies lie within the Tomales Bay watershed. One of these is the Straus Family Creamery & Dairy. *"MALT (Marin Agricultural Land Trust) enabled us to inherit the farm from my parents. It was kind of the seed money to enable me to transition to organic and start the creamery. It took three years to put the whole plan together and the business. We were able in February 1994 to become the first certified organic dairy and creamery west of the Mississippi."* - Albert Straus



Robert Vallejo

Marin's farms and ranches could not succeed without the skill and dedication of on-farm employees. Robert Vallejo is the dairy manager at the Straus Dairy, and has worked alongside Albert from the beginning as a pioneer.

"When we started the first year I thought we were going kind of crazy because we were the first ones to try organic. We didn't have any help, and I could not ask someone how to treat them back then because nobody knew."

Robert is now an expert organic dairy operator. He is also enthusiastic about organic food.

"So doing the right thing for people who eat organic meat or drink organic milk or yogurt, whatever is organic, I know is gonna be good for them." - Robert Vallejo

Cowgirl Creamery, Point Reyes Station

Every other day trucks arrive at Cowgirl Creamery delivering fresh organic milk, the basic ingredient of Cowgirl's award-winning cheeses. Cowgirl Creamery's Sue Conley and Peggy Smith made the leap from long careers in the restaurant trade, to becoming successful producers and distributors of farmstead and artisan cheeses.

"One of the things that really inspired us to make cheese was Ellen Straus. She said unless we have a marketing component to our agricultural community we cannot survive, so I thought we could do this store here and we could get people



to see cheese is being made, that cows are on the hill, so it gets that marketing program started in a very simple way."

- Sue Conley



The Giacomini Dairy & Point Reyes Original Blue Cheese

The Giacomini family has worked hard to keep the farm in the family. The dairy is typical of the smaller pasture-based operations on the north coast, far from the factory farms in the central valley. The family has worked hard together to keep the family farm healthy by diversifying into premium-quality farmstead cheese.

"My wife and I have always had in the back of our minds that some day, somehow we wanted not just to sell our milk that we get from our cows, but to be able to take it to the next level and produce a product ourselves that we could take to the consumers." - Bob Giacomini

"When he started to talk about his vision, cheese was a natural, and so that was something of interest to my sisters and I - we love to cook, we love cheese. So it was an opportunity for us to get back into the family business."

- Lynn Giacomini-Stray

Star Route Farms, Bolinas

Located on 40 acres, Star Route Farms has survived the ups and downs of small farming, much to the credit of Warren Weber and his crew. They have managed to find a place in the Bay Area food and farming culture, and their produce is prized in the best restaurants and farmers markets.

"Agriculture is really about the community. We are just the farmers....The truth is we are just stewards just serving the needs of the plants trying to grow to become food for the tables that people eat." - Warren Weber



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Marin Sun Farms

David Evans has been a pioneer in Marin for sustainable farming. His passion to educate consumers about the importance of buying and eating locally is infectious. Our effort to provide a sustainable food system in Marin owes much of its success to David and those featured in this documentary.

"I'd point at the sun, I'd point at the blade grass, and I'd cook them a nice meal... made from grass-fed beef and everything raised out of our pastures, and I'd say this all came from right here. A lot of your food can come from right here."

- David Evans

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Hidden Bounty of Marin Viewing Schedule

- ☞ *Premiering* during the Slow Food Nation Event, Friday, August 29, 5:30-6:30 pm. Foreign Cinema Restaurant, 2534 Mission Street, San Francisco CA.
- ☞ *Farm Families in Transition*, Friday, September 26, 2008, 7:00 pm, Pt. Reyes Dance Palace, Point Reyes Station, CA. Co-sponsored with MALT.
- ☞ *Family Movie Night*, Tomales Town Hall, Tomales, CA, Thursday, September 18, 2008, 7:00 pm.

Other Marin Farm News

- ☞ *Listen to The Farm Report Mondays 11:30 am-noon*, on KWMR....90.5 Point Reyes, 89.7 Bolinas, and streaming live from <http://kwmr.org/>.
- ☞ *The Marin City Farm Stand* opened on **June 6th** and there was a **grand opening celebration June 20th**. The farm stand in Marin city provides access to nutritious, sustainably grown produce and provides employment and job training for local residents. There is also community education on nutrition and health available at the stand. The farm stand is located at the entrance to **Marin City** on Drake & Buchanan, and will run **Fridays** from **3-7 pm** and **Saturdays** from **10 am-2 pm** until the **end of September**. View the streaming video dedication event at <http://www.eecom.net/>. Click on the link near the bottom of the page, under **News & Announcements**.

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