



EDITOR'S COLUMN

No finer grazing lands can be found than in Marin, on whose hillsides and in whose valleys may be seen numerous herds of cows, which supply the milk, to be turned into butter, and thereafter taken to market in immense quantities and never failing regularity. -- from the "History of Marin County," published in 1880

Bill Jensen lent me his very dog-eared copy of a *History of Marin County* that was published 125 years ago. Bill told me I would enjoy reading it, and directed me to the quote above that is on page one from the history of Tomales section. All through the text are lavish and lyrical descriptions of the fertility and productivity of our grasslands.

Not only do we have great grasslands, but we have farmers and ranchers who are great operators. Here on the north coast our reputation for genetic management and high quality livestock stand out. So a story on what is happening at Clark Summit Farm seemed appropriate. Liz Cunningham Griffin and her husband, Dan Bagley, are taking full advantage of those "finer grazing lands" by

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Clark Summit Farm: Grass-based & Diversified

Liz Cunningham milked cows and fed and tended calves on her family farm as a little girl. Her father, Alexander, better known as "Bud," developed a fine herd of Holsteins, specializing in higher butterfat from his black and whites. "Bud was a great breeder, and had some of the best genetics around," said Kevin Lunny, an ex-dairy operator, now beef producer and oyster grower. "Along with my grandfather, he also pioneered AI (artificial insemination)." Liz grew up on the farm and went on to family life and career ending up at St. Anthony Farms, milking organic Holsteins and



Liz Cunningham and Dan Bagley from Clark Summit Farm with their latest additions of grass-fed piglets.

supervising a milking crew. But the urge to farm on her own again surfaced. Liz and her husband Dan Bagley bought a few hundred baby layer chicks, certified their fledgling operation organic with Marin Organic Certified Agriculture (MOCA), and began Clark Summit Farm just north of Tomales. Liz's animal husbandry background kicked in and she began building up a grass-fed cattle herd with some of the original genetics from the family dairy herd.

Tomales produces perhaps the best grasslands in Marin (along with Point Reyes peninsula) with its cool weather, deep hillside soils, and foggy summers. So it was a natural conclusion that Liz and Dan would optimize this rich resource. The chickens would be pastured next to the cows. Dan's engineering and construction skills came in handy, and he designed and built mobile laying houses that are strategically placed out in pastures that are full of nutritious rye grass. The certified organic range-fed eggs have the orange yolks that you can only find from open-range-fed birds.

The grass-fed beef program is also underway and Liz's herd is growing. She sells off the ranch in halves and quarters. "It's absolutely delicious!" says Ellie Rilla, Marin County Farm Advisor.

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War on Weeds Workshop



UC Davis Weed Control Specialist Tom Lanini led the charge for Cooperative Extension's June workshop, "War on Weeds."

Weed control on organic farms is by far the most challenging management task the farmer faces. Decades of intensive cultivation and disturbance create soil seed banks packed with weeds ready to dominate. Tough and determined species that have adapted flourish on intensive organic cultivation. If organic methods grow great vegetables, they also produce incredible weeds! The discouraging sight of acres of pigweed or wild radish emerging after cultivation can curl the hair of the most dedicated organic farmer. When you remove the traditional tools that conventional operators rely upon: herbicides, fumigants, and expensive mechanical controls, the organic farmer is left with little more than wits and brawn!

So we brought in Tom Lanini, UC Davis's leading weed control specialist, to help us out with a "War on Weeds" workshop on June 16, at Star Route Farms. Tom has a past history in West Marin and used to surf at Bolinas as well as producing a video on organic weed control with Warren Weber and Doug Gallagher a few years back.

Here's what Tom came up with for managing weeds on our organic farms. Early on, use light tilling as weeds emerge. Get them while they are young, at least once, maybe twice or more. Use a flamer for the next batch that emerges. As the crop matures, use an appropriate cultivator. Warren and Doug use a Budding wheel hoe, but there are other cultivators that do a good job. Shallow knife cutters are popular. Tom discussed the use of some of the newer organically certified herbicides like Matran 2, which is mainly clove oil. These could be used to side swipe the beds as the plants grow, but need to be handled carefully as they are not selective, and they are expensive. Lastly, try to control weed seeding. It may take years to suppress the weeds, but surrender is not an option!

A Permanent Home for the Marin Civic Center Farmers Market

The Marin County Farmers' Market Association has embarked on a new vision. After 21 years of bringing farmers to communities in parking lots and downtowns in ten cities in the Bay Area, the Board of Directors is working with the County of Marin on the Renaissance of the Marin Center. Currently we are in the process of visioning the project. We hope to have butcher facilities to support our beef, pork, rabbit, and chicken farms, and refrigeration for our cheese and milk producers. We are looking to bring a permanency to the Market while still having the freedom the small family farmer needs to come and go from the markets. The Civic Center Farmers' Market is bigger and better than it's ever been, with more farmers, bakers, food purveyors, and customers than ever participating. We have added a chef's demo throughout the summer, highlighting different farmers, food purveyors, and local chefs every week. We are ripe and ready for a new permanent home. Please email any suggestions you may have for the indoor pavilion to marincofarmers@aol.com. We look forward to your input. - *Brigitte Moran, Director, Marin County Farmers' Market Association*

Taste of Marin 2005

It's time again to gather and celebrate Marin's agricultural bounty by honoring the people who bring it from the fields to our tables. On September 9 *Taste of Marin* will feature local farmers and ranchers and showcase local celebrity chefs such as Heidi Krahling of Insalata's and Bryan Waites of Sabor of Spain. In its 6th year, *Taste of Marin* will bring together Marin's farmers, ranchers, cheesemakers, bakers, and vintners.

This year's event will be something different. There will be no sit-down dinner, but a large, outdoor grazing area instead. Guests will be offered a variety of specialties: organic produce, grass-fed beef, poultry, local wines, cheese, seafood, and even locally produced organic ice cream. Because of the overwhelming response to last year's event, *Taste of Marin* will be held at a larger venue in one of the most spectacular locations in Marin County - the nineteenth century Spanish-style courtyard of St. Vincent's in San Rafael.

Special highlights of the evening will include an auction of one-of-a-kind prizes, such as an organic BBQ for eight at a local ranch, a weekend at a spectacular Point Reyes B&B, or a one-day nature camp for kids. There will also be live music by a surprise guest and some of the most phenomenal food you've ever eaten. - *Helge Hellberg, Marin Organic*

Homegrown Kids

The Community Alliance With Family Farmers and the Center for Food and Justice in Los Angeles sponsored an all-day Farm To School conference on May 24 at the Sonoma County Office of Education.

Farm To School programs are springing up all over the US. Locally, the Marin Food Systems Project and Marin Organic are leading one such effort. These programs help to increase student lunch participation, increase fresh fruit and vegetable consumption, decrease food waste, and expose children to agricultural products grown by local farmers in their region and in their own school gardens.

The Farm To School effort looks to integrate garden-based curriculum into the schools through student-run school gardens, visits to local farms, classroom visits from farmers, culinary arts programs, and more. The local effort links schools and farms in Marin, Sonoma, Lake, Napa, and Mendocino counties.



Called *Homegrown Kids: Building Farm To School Partnerships in the North Coast*, the conference was attended by 120 farmers, food service directors, school administrators, students, and community organizations. Conference speakers included Dr. Carl Wong, Sonoma County Superintendent of Schools, who introduced Mary Jane Burke, Marin County Superintendent of Schools, food service directors from Novato/San Rafael, Healdsburg and Santa Rosa City schools, Dan Benedetti, president of Clover Stornetta Dairy, chef Jesse Cool, who delivered the keynote, students from Vintage High School in Napa, and farmers Sally Carstensen, Torrey Olson and David Retsky. A delicious salad bar lunch, using fresh, local ingredients, was prepared by culinary arts students from Casa Grande High School in Petaluma.

For more information on how you can get involved - as a farmer, parent, educator, or concerned citizen - in feeding our kids healthy, nutritious, homegrown food, call coordinator and Two Rock Valley farmer Deborah Walton at 707-766-7171.

- Deborah Walton

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Liz and Dan felt like they still needed something to keep busy, so they added a dozen hogs to fill out the ranch. The piglets are always out in the grass, which accounts for about a third of their feed intake. Pastured pigs graze right next to laying chickens and cattle.

Just to round things out, the ranchers decided to try a few spuds to take advantage of the famous Tomales potato growing soils.

Liz seems low key and matter-of-fact about her operation. She is full time at Clark Summit Farm now, having left St. Anthony's to build her own operation. "I like animal husbandry," she says with her characteristic understated style. But her and Dan's operation is a real gem and boost for sustainable agriculture in Marin. Her reliance on the natural grass resources for multi-species grazing, and the growing demand for healthy, ecologically sound farming, and just plain love of the land and her animals, add up to an operation that looks like a winner. - Steve Quirt, UC

Cooperative Extension



Stewart Campbell from Olema with his Jersey calves, Sarah and Sylvia

Jerseys Return to the Stewart Ranch

Boyd Stewart must be looking down from heaven with a special twinkle in his eye as he watches his great-grandson tending to two Jersey calves that harken back in time to the days when Boyd took over the Olema dairy and milked one of the best Jersey herds in the county.

Stewart Campbell already shows hereditary signs of being a proficient dairy operator. "I'm going to milk them and then make ice cream!" he says proudly with a Stewart-like twinkle in his eye! "They like me the most because I take care of them. If they give me a lot of milk, I'm going to put silver bells on them!"

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pasturing chickens, cattle, and hogs on their ranch in Tomales. Thirty percent of the feed for the hogs and chickens come from grass, and all the feed for the cattle is from the rich Tomales pastures.

Another young entrepreneur, Stewart Campbell, is rekindling the dairy spirit at the Stewart Ranch in Olema with his two Jersey calves. Stewart is seven years old and like everyone else in the Stewart family, is ready to make something out of all that grass!

According to an 1880 history book of Marin, lush pastures are not the only thing that makes our county special. Even 125 years ago, specialty crops were recognized as premium quality. *"In no country in the world can better crops of beets be produced than in the small, rich valleys of this county."*

Today's agricultural landscape in Marin reflects the crops and natural history of the past - in the landscape, in the crops and more importantly, in the entrepreneurial and persistent nature of its farmers and ranchers. It would be safe to say that we have not strayed too far from our original roots, and that our roots are still running deep on our farms and ranches. - *Steve Quirt, UC Cooperative Extension*

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News from Marin County Farms, Ranches and Producers

- ☞ **Point Reyes Original Blue Cheese** won a **gold medal** at the **2005 California State Fair** in Sacramento in the blue-veined cheese category.
- ☞ **McEvoy Ranch** is replacing a number of its beautiful, **field-grown olive trees** with other varieties. These large, producing trees will all need new homes and are for sale through spring 2006. Interested parties can contact **Samantha Kirby** at **(707) 769-4123 ext. 5560** or **sank@mcevoyranch.com**.
- ☞ **Liz Daniels from Cow Track Ranch** has won **First Place** and **Best of Show** in Horticulture in the leafy and stem vegetables categories, as well as **First Place** with the easter egg radish followed by **Second Place** for parsley at the **Marin County Fair**.
- ☞ **Marin Sun Farms** will open a new butcher shop and eatery on **Sunday, July 10 at 10:30 am**. The restaurant will be open for eat-in and take-out lunch service every week Friday thru Monday from 10:30-6:30. The butcher shop will have the same hours, with the butcher available to make specialty cuts on Fridays and Mondays only. The emphasis will be on providing local food at affordable prices.
- ☞ **Marin Organic** and **UC Cooperative Extension** presented a colorful and richly decorated exhibit at the **Marin County Fair** displaying **Grown in Marin** farm products and an agricultural history timeline of Marin.
- ☞ **UC Cooperative Extension** has constructed a **History of Marin County Agriculture Timeline** which is available at **www.growninmarin.org**

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