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Gardens of Goodness

Over looking beautiful Lake Waubesa, near McFarland, Wisconsin, sits the Gardens of Goodness Farm. Husband and Wife, Jim and Barb Lindemann call this place home. This small modest farm holds nearly 3 acres of productive farm land. The Lindemann's specialize in fresh picked fruits and vegetables. If you were to ask them what they are known most for, it would be apples. In fact, they grow more than 40 different varieties of apples. Most of these apples are "antique" apples, which are also called heirloom apples. The "antique" apples are varieties that can be more than 50 years old! This kind of apple, the Lindemanns say, is best when making cider.

Gardens of Goodness started around 20 years ago. Both Jim and Barb loved to garden, and both had strong agricultural backgrounds in their family. Their farm started from just a few trees, and has since then grown to over a 100. Most of these trees are old fashioned, and the varieties of apples can no longer be found in stores. Barb Lindemann explained how apples found in stores today are bred for color and size, rather than taste, and that soon all apples will be genetically modified. The Lindemanns know the importance of old "antique" apples and they do not want them to vanish from existence. Gardens of Goodness differ from other apple farms because of the diversity that they offer. The Lindemanns believe that the satisfaction of offering this diversity far outweighs the challenges.

They are one of the newer and smaller of the CSA farms, but they are big on taste. Along with growing apples, they specialize in cider. They say that it is important to put enough sweetness in the cider, but also not to lose the bitterness and tannin that makes cider important.

The Lindemanns took their cider to a taste testing conference in the UW-Madison Arboretum. The competition was sponsored by Slow Food USA, and offered 100 spaces. The purpose behind all this was to restore the heritage of cider making.

Gardens of Goodness are organically certified for the first time this year. They are very excited about this, even though they have always used organic methods in their farming. Because they are so close to Lake Waubesa, they have taken advantage of using lake weed as mulch. This method produces fertility and weed control for the plants. Also, they have been using the organic matter of clay in their soil.

When the summer months full of fresh produce end and the fall cider making dwindles down, the work is not over for the Lindemanns. Winter months prove to be just as busy for them. Planning for the next growing season needs to be done, along with purchasing the seeds. As early as November and December, orders need to be filled for next year's trees. When some farmers may make their way to warmer climates for vacation, the Lindemanns head off to conferences to keep the education flowing. They are always interested in new and better methods for growing apples. Pruning is another important task that needs to be done in the winter months. This process is particularly vital to the health of the plants and trees. It gets rid of unwanted waste that can inhibit the growth and prospering of the fruit or vegetables. There is rarely any down time in the course of keeping up an apple farm.

According to Jim, the hardest part of maintaining a farm is the bureaucracy surrounding it. Especially now that Gardens of Goodness is organically certified, they are put through many inspection processes. Being a small grower, the Lindemanns have a great disadvantage. Because Farming is increasingly becoming a big business, Jim sometimes finds it hard to break

even. However, aside from the politics that surround any kind of business, The Lindemanns like the sense of accomplishing something positive. They appreciate the connectivity with nature and the community that farming brings. If they could change one thing, it would be more a part of the community. They would love to branch out and use their knowledge to educate the youth in their community.

Although the Lindemanns are very knowledgeable about apples, they still love to educate themselves on the present and future of the apple industry. Jim feels strongly that “education is a part of any good organization”. Not only is a solid education beneficial for the farmer producing the goods but also the consumers benefit. It is important to know where your food is coming from, and when your fresh fruit and vegetables are coming from Gardens of Goodness, you know that they are coming from a good place. Their goal along with MACSAC is to reestablish the relationship between producer and consumer.

Despite their small size, Gardens of Goodness sure does not lack the heart that it takes to make a difference in the community. Not only are they providing goodness from their hearts, they provide goodness right out of their front yard. The Lindemanns do the majority of their selling from a stand set up at their home during the harvesting seasons. They have a great passion for what they do, and they prove that small producers can do just as good of a job as large mega-producers. They strive to provide diverse variety in their products, even though it may be challenging. They love the connection a group like MACSAC brings to not only the consumers but the farmers as well. They also know how important it is to keep the “antique” apple heritage alive. Over all, the Lindemanns and their Gardens of Goodness provide us with the perfect example of what an American apple farmer is and should be.