

## WHO'S YOUR FARMER?

# JOEL KUEHNHOLD lonely oak farm



### DESCRIBE YOUR FARM

My farm is located 6 miles north of Milladore in the middle of the Mead Wildlife Area. Lonely Oak Farm is a transitional organic farm. On our 80 acres, we rotationally graze almost 200 head of sheep, 200 laying hens, a small beef herd, and a few pigs. We grow wheat for animal feed and flour as well as hay. We also grow 6 acres of vegetables. An on-farm, licensed kitchen is used for canning and preparing eggs for resale at a local, natural food store. A wide variety of sustainable techniques are utilized, resulting in high-quality products raised in harmony with the natural surroundings. I have two part-time employees, Taylor Christiansen and Justin Reinke. Taylor helps with vegetables and Justin helps with the livestock and fieldwork. My mom helps with farmers markets and canning salsa and spaghetti sauce.

### WHAT BROUGHT YOU INTO FARMING?

When I was little, about 5 or 6, I was picking raspberries with my grandma Kuehnhold behind their machine shed on their farm. I told her that I wanted to be a farmer just like my grandpa. She told me I should be a teacher like my grandpa Ruesch...so a few days later, I told my Grandpa Ruesch that I was going to be a teacher when I grew up. He said that I should be a farmer instead. In the end, I became a teacher AND a farmer! Soon, I will be leaving the teaching profession to focus on my farm and work from home as a grazing specialist, teaching farmers about grazing their livestock. Farming is in my blood, and it is my family's heritage. I can't imagine doing anything else with my life.

### WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT FARMING?

It is something hard to put into words. It is a feeling, a presence, and emotion that satisfies something deep in my soul. From the adrenaline rush of helping an ewe give birth to a lamb, to the connection with the earth as I plant a seed and wait patiently until it sprouts, the process of producing food fulfills a need to live a purpose-filled life. Even on the coldest days of winter, I find satisfaction in listening to the sheep chew their cud in the evening. The joys of living an agricultural life far outweigh the discomforts.

### WHAT IS MOST DIFFICULT ABOUT FARMING?

I find poorly authored and executed policies regarding the production and processing of food and agricultural commodities incredibly disturbing. I am also frustrated by the conservative mentality that bigger is always better and that finite environmental resources are of no consequence.

### WHAT IS YOUR HOPE FOR FARMING?

My hope is for the continued renaissance of family farms. True, there is a hungry world population to feed, but by embracing the very best technological advances made in agriculture, while recognizing time-honored skills & traditions, we can meet the challenge of feeding the planet. I hope to see an American and global culture which respects the important role farmers play in our everyday lives; in turn, this will inspire more farmers to grow sustainably and keep families on their land.

### WHERE CAN YOU BE FOUND?

At the Bull Fall's Farmers' Market, the Wausau Winter Farmers' Market, The Market on Strongs in Stevens Point, Family Natural Foods in Wisconsin Rapids, the Bulk Buying Club group associated with Farmshed, and of course, on the farm. [www.facebook.com/LonelyOakFarmLLC](http://www.facebook.com/LonelyOakFarmLLC)

### RECIPE: TOMATO BASIL ROAST LAMB/PORK

#### DIRECTIONS:

Salt and pepper meat to your taste (if using pork, brown meat after seasoning; lamb should never be browned)  
Generously cover meat with basil  
Add 1 quart canned whole tomatoes per 2 lbs meat (may use 1-2 lbs fresh tomatoes)  
Add a pinch of brown sugar or maple syrup to reduce acidity  
Water as needed - just enough to prevent scorching

Roast in a 350 degree oven for about 3 hours for 2 lbs of meat, or until meat is tender and separating from the bone.  
Serve over brown rice.