

WHO'S YOUR FARMER?

DANIEL & JULIE KNETTER

Rock Ridge Orchard, LLC



DESCRIBE YOUR FARM

I farm with my wife, Julie, and our three sons, Ryan, Noah, and Jediah. Our orchard is located in the beautiful rolling hills of southwest Marathon County. We are 11 miles west of Mosinee and 6 miles east of Stratford on Hwy 153. Rock Ridge Orchard is the largest commercial apple orchard in Marathon County. We currently have 5,000 apple trees planted on seven acres. We grow nearly 30 different varieties of apples and 4 varieties of tart cherries. We have been growing apples for 12 years now with modern high density plantings and are looking to expand the orchard in the near future. We also offer seasonal agritainment including a retail store, bakery, wagon rides, petting zoo, play area, pick your own apples, and farm tours. Julie & I are very involved with Farm to School, our local FFA chapter, and area schools. We host thousands of school children at our orchard every fall. We grow mainly Honeycrisp, and also newer varieties such as Zestar, Frostbite, and Crimson Crisp.

WHAT BROUGHT YOU INTO FARMING?

I was born and raised on a dairy farm. I later farmed with my parents and grew ginseng for 15 years. Julie also spent many years of her youth working on dairy and ginseng farms. After I got out of that farming I knew I wanted to continue farming and looked at several different options. I started to do some research and developed several "test" blocks of apple and cherry trees, looking to see which varieties did the best over winter. About the time I was getting into this, Honeycrisp was an up and coming variety. Well, we all know the rest of the story!

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT FARMING?

Farming is in my blood. I enjoy working outdoors, with plants and nature, tilling the soil, and planting trees. My biggest reward is watching people, especially children, come out to the orchard and pick the "fruits" of our labor with their families enjoying the outdoors.

WHAT IS MOST DIFFICULT ABOUT FARMING?

The biggest challenge we see is weather. Climate change is definitely a real problem. Frost events during bloom is one of our main concerns. Wind/hail can ruin an entire crop and damage trees. Honeycrisp is also a very difficult variety to grow commercially.

WHAT IS YOUR HOPE FOR FARMING?

Our main focus when we started the orchard was to provide local fruit and educate our community. We are quickly building on this with orchard tours and providing fresh, local fruit to area schools. Our hope is that people, especially children, come out to local farms and learn where their food comes from and how it's grown.

WHERE CAN YOU BE FOUND?

4994 West State Hwy 153, Edgar, WI. We sell most of our apples through our retail store and occasionally at local specialty stores. Website: rockridgeorchard.com Facebook: Rock Ridge Orchard, LLC

RECIPE: SNICKER SALAD

INGREDIENTS:

10 Honeycrisp apples
1 16 oz. sour cream
1 medium-sized Cool Whip
8-10 regular size snicker bars

DIRECTIONS:

In a large bowl, mix Cool Whip and sour cream until evenly distributed. Peel, cut, and core Honeycrisp apples. Do a few apples at a time and mix them into the Cool Whip mixture to prevent browning. Cut apples into small 1/2" x 1/2" pieces. Cut snickers bars into same size pieces. In a large bowl, add all ingredients and stir together thoroughly. The top can be garnished with bits of Snicker bar. Chill and serve.

For a healthier option, lite sour cream and fat free cool whip can be substituted.