

If you're looking for new ways to add to your bottom line, take a look at the money-making ideas featured here and on the next page.

If you've found or heard about a new income-boosting idea, we'd like to hear about it. Send details to: FARM SHOW Magazine, P.O. Box 1029, Lakeville, Minn. 55044 (ph 800 834-9665) or email us at: [editor@farmshow.com](mailto:editor@farmshow.com).



Klaire and Caleb Howerton (at left) operate a business venture that combines their love of cooking and farming. They hosted their first farm-to-table event last March.

## Farm-To-Table Dinners

By Klaire Howerton

My husband Caleb and I have always had a love of cooking and farming. After purchasing a six-acre farm near Springfield, Mo., in 2016, we started planning a business venture that would combine both activities.

In March of 2017 we hosted our first farm-to-table event. Each event features a 5-course meal that highlights ingredients grown or raised on our farm. We raise pork, rabbit, quail, lamb, chickens, and layer hens, and grow a large garden. The menu always changes, featuring whatever is in season at the time. Additional ingredients, such as goat cheese or fruit, are sourced locally from other farms in the Ozarks region.

Caleb creates, cooks and plates each menu item himself from the kitchen inside our nearly one-hundred-year-old farm house. He studied culinary science at Ozarks Technical Community College. Understanding the chef's perspective has helped him not just in his own kitchen, but also when marketing our farm products to local restaurants. His clients appreciate his attention to detail and his understanding of how to purchase, store and prepare the meat and vegetables he provides them with.

I greet our guests, keep the drinks flowing, and provide a farm tour for dinner goes to allow them to see where and how the food they are eating was grown and raised. I used to manage a large farmers market in Springfield and have a background in events, marketing and social media, which has helped us reach out and connect with people.

Dinners are hosted in our garage, which we have renovated to give it a rustic feel. The most eye-catching feature is our reclaimed pallet wall, which Caleb built out of pallets we saved from the feed store. Burlap, mason jars and fresh flowers add to the theme. The space can hold up to 16 people – just enough for enjoyable conversation, but small enough to create an intimate dining experience. Each seat costs \$35 and we market the tickets through our website, social media pages, and word of mouth. Several people have become repeat guests at the twice-monthly events.



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What began as a way to help us reach our goal of both working full time on the farm has become not just a large source of our income, but a way to meet new people and educate the community about the importance of local food. We plan to host the events as late into the year as the weather allows.

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The 2-in. dia. tree growing out of right side of stump (see arrow) started with a branch turning up 3 to 4 years ago. New tree started to the left is a third generation leader that will grow fast into a well-formed, attractive tree. Sheep keep weeds down between trees.

## A New Way To Grow Christmas Trees

Phil Quinn cuts and sells multiple Christmas trees from the same stumps. It's a practice his dad, Elwood Quinn, came up with when he started the family Christmas tree farm in the 1990's. The 13,000 trees on the farm produce many times that number of trees over their life.

"If you cut the stump above the lowest branch, that branch will turn to the light and become the leader for a new tree," explains Elwood. "Customers are asked to leave 1 or 2 branches on the stump when cutting their tree."

Originally Elwood tied branches into a vertical position. Today his son Phil lets the branch find its own way.

"The branches tip to the sky on their own," says Phil. "If we dig out the old stump and replant, we have to wait as much as 10 years to harvest a new tree."

With customers cutting around 2,000 Christmas trees each year, it is hard to keep new seedlings from being stepped on and crushed. That's not a problem when the new tree is growing out of a stump.

With "stump culture", as they call it, the Quinns have a new tree in as little as 3 to 5 years after the first cutting. After that, they get a new tree ready to cut every 2 to 3 years.

The secret to the fast growth is an ever larger root system. Quinn estimates approximately 75 percent of the cut trees will survive and about 50 percent will grow a saleable tree.

Practicing stump culture requires wider rows and tree spacings. The Quinns add 1 to 2 ft. to the normal 6 ft. space between trees and 8 ft. between rows.

"Customers wander the farm to select their tree and then signal an employee who brings a saw," explains Phil. "They can cut their own or our employee will do it for them."

The tree is tagged with the customer's name, and it's taken to the main building to be bagged or tied to a car roof. This also eliminates a customer finding a better tree and discarding one they had already cut.

Phil says they have gone pesticide-free on their Christmas trees for the past 4 years, something their customers appreciate. They apply compost to young trees and a foliar application of slow release nitrogen. The trees also get sheep manure delivered by a flock of Shropshires that graze the tree stands, also eliminating the need to mow.

"The sheep do a great job of keeping grasses and weeds down," says Phil. "They leave the trees alone, with the exception being the white pine. The sheep love white pine, so we don't graze them there."

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