

This Farm's Paying Crop Is People

You could say the "crop" at Quinn family farm, which hosts 100,000 visitors a year, is people. The farm is situated on an island in the St. Lawrence River just southwest of Montreal, Canada. Admission-paying visitors enjoy a broad range of activities including pick-your-own vegetables, fruit and Christmas trees, and the chance to see founder Elwood Quinn's rare livestock breeds.

Phil Quinn, Elwood's son, bought the farm with his wife Stephanie in 2010. "We have rare breeds because we feel it is important to showcase them and educate the public about them. That includes explaining why they are no longer commercially used."

Breeds include Berkshire and Hampshire hogs, Shropshire sheep, Milking Shorthorn oxen, and Chantecler (the official Canadian breed) chickens. Until a rooster went missing, Elwood was breeding the extremely rare Hungarian Yellow chickens. He also has the beginning of a White Park cattle herd with one heifer.

While the Hampshire hog is not technically a rare breed, it is considered the oldest recognized swine breed in North America. Hampshires are also the breed Elwood's father raised, notes Phil.

"The preservation of the old breeds is something we hold dear," he says. "One way to do that is to feature them live on the farm, as well as in the freezer for our customers to savor later."

Elwood is active with Rare Breeds Canada and encourages people to get

involved. "We really appreciate the articles FARM SHOW has run about rare breeds," he says.

Elwood and his wife Marie cleared brush to start the farm in the early 1980's, first planting berries and sweet corn. Over time they expanded to include pumpkins, asparagus and more berries, 18 varieties of apples spread across 3,800 trees, and a wide variety of vegetables. A bakery barn offers fresh baked pies, muffins and other treats, as well as preserves and jams. The snack barn offers locally made sausage on homemade buns, homemade salsa, in-season corn on the cob, salads and soups. During Christmas tree season, the menu expands to a full meal of soup, meat pie, squash, baked beans, pie, and a hot drink.

In addition to products baked, grown or made on the farm, the Quinns feature other locally grown or produced products, including candy, goat cheese, honey, maple syrup, soap, and meat.

"Most of the pork and lamb that we sell is from our own herds," says Phil.

The different breeds are on display in the animal barn, often with babies as well as adults. Chickens and other poultry run loose. Elwood admits that mixing the non-farm public with livestock has its challenges. He recalls one boy who was quite proud of having "taught" a Chantecler rooster to jump at him.

"He teased the rooster, making him aggressive, which meant we had to send him to the stock pot," says Elwood. "You can't



Admission-paying visitors at the Quinn family farm in Quebec enjoy a broad range of activities, including the chance to see rare livestock breeds. Photo at left shows their big bale barn.

have an aggressive rooster around little kids."

Adults can be just as much of a trial. He describes a woman who chastised him for the length of the lead rope on the White Park calf. It was too short, she informed him.

"I asked her what the right length was, to which she replied that she didn't know, but

she knew it was too short," he recalls with a chuckle.

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This greenhouse is covered with LUMO solar panels to boost plant growth and also generate electricity. Panels convert green light to red light, the most efficient light for photosynthesis.

Solar Panel Greenhouse

Glenn Alers has seen up to 50 percent more plant growth inside his LUMO solar panel covered greenhouses. The special panels contain strips of low-density silicon photovoltaics (PV) to generate electricity. A thin layer of luminescent material on the back side of the panels converts green light to red light, the most efficient light for photosynthesis.

"I came up with the idea about 5 years ago and spent about 3 years in greenhouse trials to ensure no negative impact on the plants," says Alers, Soliculture, Inc. "Since then we have been scaling up the concept and now have installed the first commercially viable, mass-produced, luminescent solar concentrator."

Alers notes that others have attempted to put conventional solar panels over greenhouse crops and seen a production drop.

"We looked at how much light we can block before we impact plant growth," says Alers.

Converting green light to red was a key to success. More red light meant less stress on the plant. Disease stress decreased, and plants developed faster and produced fruit longer. A 6-week production cycle would take only 5 weeks, while cucumbers that would produce for 8 weeks produced for 10 under the panels.

"A stand-alone solar array will generate about triple the power, but you can't grow anything under it," says Alers. "Ours is a tradeoff between power generation and food crop performance with neutral-to-positive impact on production. With high value crops, you can easily double your revenue."

Unfortunately, the technology is only economical for larger greenhouse operations. When large areas are under glass, using the LUMO panels instead of common greenhouse glazing makes economic sense, says Alers.

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Milling Business Thrives On Locally-Grown Grains

Stone-ground flour made from locally-grown grains is hard to find in many areas, but not if you're within the two-state marketing area of Lonesome Stone Milling in Lone Rock, Wisconsin. That's where Gilbert Williams, Judy Ettenhofer, and Gary Zimmer mill rye and wheat grains into specialized flours for a growing niche market.

Their business venture started a decade ago in a building that's more than 100 years old. They use a 60-year-old Clipper 29-D wooden fanning mill to clean rye and wheat grown by local farmers. Williams says their first venture into milling happened when Jeremy Lynch, their first employee, ground rye and wheat seed in his small home coffee grinder. He blended the ingredients together and what began as an experiment is now the locally-famous Lonesome Stone pancake mix.

"After we made larger batches, I drove the mix around to farmers' markets and it became very popular. That's when I realized farmers in this area had the right soil chemistry for very flavorful grains."

They began stone milling those grains into a variety of flours using an outside vendor and eventually purchased their own new 30-in. Meadows mill. Also known as a grist mill, the device has a stationary bedstone and two revolving millstones, all made from granite quarried in North Carolina. Williams says their 30-in. model can mill up to 1,000 lbs. of grain an hour.

Lonesome Stone Milling sources their grains mostly from farmers whose land is in the Driftless Region of Southwest Wisconsin. Incoming grains are cleaned, then stored in one-ton tote bags until they're ready to be milled.



A Wisconsin business mills rye and wheat grains into specialized flours for a growing niche market. Photo shows new Meadows grist mill with 2 revolving millstones.

Says Williams, "We really try to bring the farmers as close to the end users as possible, which our customers really seem to appreciate." The business also produces brewer's grains used by distilleries.

To produce the ideal grains their mill needs, Williams has leaned on his Masters Degree in Agronomy and had assistance from the University of Wisconsin at Madison. They've developed a special variety of hard red winter wheat that can thrive east of the Mississippi River and withstand Wisconsin's harsh winters.

Lonesome Stone Milling currently markets its flour in Chicago, Madison and Milwaukee. "Chicago has become a real 'foodie' city, and we'd like to tap into that market even more," says Williams. Independent distilleries also use Lonesome Stone Milling products.

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