

## Grower Sells More Than 40 Rare Seed Potato Varieties



A sampling of Grand Teton Organics potatoes.

Pick your potato, whether Russian Banana, German Butter Ball, Baby Red, French Fingerling or Russet Burbank. John Hoggan has them all and more. His Grand Teton Organics grows out more than 40 varieties of organic seed potatoes every year. Hoggan brings a lifetime of potato

production expertise to his breeding enterprise.

"I've worked with more than 300 named varieties and uncounted clones and numbered selections that don't have names from breeding programs at major universities," says Hoggan. "I started more than 60 years ago, following my dad around potato fields."

Hoggan has put that expertise to use in developing his organic seed potato business. Scroll through the options he offers in colors and sizes, and it's hard to imagine he was 15 years old before he saw anything but a Russet Burbank or Red Pontiac. Today he offers purple, red, yellow and white, not to mention variations of each and some that are multi-colored.

Wild Purple produces two different colored potatoes from the same plant. One may have dark purple skin and dark purple flesh, while the other has dark purple skin with big yellow eyes and variegated purple and yellow flesh.

"It's exciting to see how the market has changed as people look for different

varieties," says Hoggan. "Back in the 1990's, I had one called Bintje (pronounced Benjee), an old European variety. There was no market for yellow potatoes at the time, but now there's incredible demand."

Many of Hoggan's prized varieties are even older, much older. Nearly all modern potatoes were taken to Europe by the Spanish conquistadores in the 1500's. Over the next 500 years, they traveled back across the Atlantic. Many were unchanged. However, one of his varieties never left the Americas.

"The Ozette fingerling is one the Spanish brought north along the coast and traded with the Native Americans," says Hoggan. "It's been grown for at least 2 centuries by the Makah people of northwest Washington."

Hoggan suggests planting an entire Ozette the size of an index finger with 10 to 15 eyes. Of those, perhaps five will form stems with each stem producing from 7 to 15 potatoes in the single hill.

"You may have 50 fingerling potatoes under one hill," says Hoggan.

Not all Hoggan's potatoes are heirlooms. Baby Red is a new variety offered for the first time this year. It sets up to 20 bright red mini

tubers the size of a golf ball or smaller that are also bright red on the inside.

One of Hoggan's most unusual offerings is True Seed from potatoes. Most people plant pieces of a tuber. True potato seed forms in small balls on the stem after flowering. One seed ball may have 20 true seeds, each producing a unique set of tubers when planted.

Each True Seed order consists of five dried seed balls selected randomly from 30 different varieties. On his website, he outlines the process to be followed.

"Let them grow full season, and you'll be amazed at the colors, types, sizes and shapes of the potatoes you have produced," says Hoggan.

Hoggan offers several helpful hints for planting seed potatoes on his website. Checking out the hints, as well as viewing the 45 varieties of potatoes for sale, is worth a visit.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Grand Teton Organics, 1872 Henry St., Idaho Falls, Idaho 83401 (ph 208-313-7303; joolhna@msn.com; www.grandtetonorganics.com).

## Community Cannery In Operation Since

### 1940

The Callaway Cannery offers Virginians a place to prep, process and preserve food without dirtying their own kitchens. Operational since 1940, the Cannery continues to be a valued community space.

Community canneries began in America during WWII as a place for women to preserve the produce from their victory gardens. Most were built near schools, as a portion of the canned goods went to feed children. Some of these canneries still exist today, especially in rural areas. Now, they help community members connect and relearn the art of preserving food.

The Callaway Cannery is open on Tuesdays and Fridays. You'll find the

cinderblock building tucked behind the local Callaway Elementary School. Pricing is per item; for metal cans, it's \$0.60/pint and \$0.80/quart, and \$0.10/pint and \$0.20/quart for glass jars. Note that you must supply your own jars, lids, and rings.

The Cannery itself has large sinks and plenty of stainless-steel counter space for prep work, along with cold-water-bath containers, kettles of numerous sizes, and an oil boiler. Expect to clean up your own mess or pay a cleaning fee.

Many customers use the Cannery for their garden produce, while others purchase and preserve food directly from the grocery store. Canning meat is becoming increasingly common, especially as inflation drives food costs.

Currently, the Callaway Cannery serves

between 150 to 200 customers each year. All are welcome, even those who don't know how to can. There are always people around willing to help with any questions.

Apple butter remains the most popular product, and many area churches use the Cannery for making preserved goods for their fundraising efforts. Everyone at the Cannery focuses on their own projects, but it's common to mingle and lend a hand when needed.

As the Cannery isn't a commercial facility, it's not liable for any mishaps or problems with the canning process or your food. Connect through the Cannery's Facebook page for more information.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Callaway Cannery, 8451 Callaway Rd., Callaway, Va. 24067 (Facebook: Callaway Cannery).



Many customers use the Cannery for their garden produce, while others purchase and preserve food directly from the grocery store. Canning meat is becoming increasingly common, especially as inflation drives food costs.

## They Slaughter, Butcher And Sell Hogs On Their Own Farm

Howard Elmer's pigs never leave the farm until they're packaged up and sold. The farm's Pigtail Pork is a one-stop shop for pork lovers in the Pacific Northwest. Even the barley fed to their pigs is raised on the farm.

"We have customers all over the West," says Elmer. "We've had orders from as far away as Florida, usually family members of a local customer who have tried our product. When they're in the area, they'll stop and pick up meat."

Elmer, his wife Cherie, and their son Sage have built a dedicated clientele. They and Sage's son Ezekiel raise and process about 400 hogs a year. Their customers willingly wait 6 months or longer for their orders to be processed.

Elmer admits that Pigtail Pork is different from what he describes as show pig pork. He breeds for longevity and taste with a cross of mostly Chester White, Duroc and Berkshire. Unlike the larger, commercial hog operations that feed corn, the Elmers feed their pigs barley.

"Barley changes the flavor of the meat immensely from corn-fed," says Elmer. "I fed corn in the past, but the meat seemed oily and not the right texture."



Pigtail Pork products in their smokehouse.

Recently Elmer was reminded how different Pigtail Pork is. They processed an off-farm hog for the local FFA instructor.

"He and I have a constant argument over the difference between breeding for longevity and breeding for the show ring," says Elmer. "His hog was solid muscle with no fat. I

wouldn't eat it if he gave it to me. It would be like chewing on an old tire. The fat provides the flavor and juiciness. We endeavor to produce pork that you can cut with your fork, that'll melt in your mouth."

The Elmers have been producing melt-in-your-mouth Pigtail Pork for 20 years. Prior to that, they sold their pigs on the hoof to commercial buyers. Gradually the market changed as other producers in the region got out of the business. Elmer credits Sage for suggesting on-farm processing.

"The first thing we did was build a slaughterhouse," says Elmer. "We looked at plans with slaughtering, processing, and freezers in the same location as customers picked up their products. However, we know people don't want to associate the live animal with the meat they buy. Our slaughterhouse is out of sight and out of mind."

Hogs are slaughtered one day a week. Once moved to the processing area they are cure, wrapped, and moved to the freezers. Cuts like hams and pork belly and specialties like sausage and snack sticks are loaded into a vacuum tumbler with a special salt and sugar mix.

"The tumbler puts the cure into the muscle in about 3 days instead of the 15 it did in the past," says Elmer. "We do this because we don't have enough time or space to hold product while curing."

The Elmers also make dry-cured products

like prosciutto and Italian sausage. "With dry curing, we use the natural enzymes in the air to work on the meat, but you have to maintain the correct levels of humidity and temperature," says Elmer.

Getting products like bacon cured just right is key to building the customer base, notes Elmer. Comments from other small packing plants in the area say that customers complain if a cure is too salty or there is an off flavor.

"If you have really good sausage, ham and bacon, then the rest of the cuts will be acceptable," he says.

Referrals have resulted in a customer list of several hundred names with new ones added regularly.

One thing the Elmers won't do with their pork is ship it. Customers have to come to the farm in southeast Oregon and pick up their orders. Many are local, but many others are from Portland and even Seattle, 8 hrs. away.

Elmer encourages FARM SHOW readers interested in doing on-farm processing to join a state meat processors association. He is a member of both the Northwest and the Montana Meat Processors Association.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Pigtail Pork, 67750 Lower Cove Rd., Cove, Ore. 97824 (ph 541-568-4671; Facebook: Pigtail Pork).