

Saint Isidore Homestead

(Amanda's Chickens and Eggs)

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Saint Isidore Homestead

Thanks for your support over the past year. It has been our pleasure to serve you. We hope that you have enjoyed our eggs and some of our other agricultural products. Thanks also to those of you who have visited our place. The conversations have been great and we greatly appreciate your support of our lifestyle. We continue to expand in all fronts: Our newest member of the family, Santiago Rafael, was born on November 14. We have added ducks to our poultry flock, and our garden produced enough food to keep us fed for most of the year.

Since Amanda's egg business has evolved to become a family homestead project, we are renaming the newsletter after Saint Isidore of Seville, the patron saint of farmers and rural life. To us, it boils down to faith, family, and simple life. Read along for some homestead stories from 2015 and some projects for 2016.



2015 in Review

There was much we celebrated in 2015. Here are some highlights

Permaculture

In 2015 we started implementing permaculture design principles in the homestead. The results far surpassed our expectations. Polycultures galore, water distributed evenly and passively, animals integrated in the system, large number of guest pollinators, little pest or disease issues, and abundance of food.

More Chickens

A new flock of Black Australorps came in last spring. This new generation of hard-working chickens is already providing most of the eggs you have been enjoying lately. They will also be serving as our breeding stock in 2016.

And Ducks Too

Late in the summer we received a dozen ducklings. These Khaki Campbell ducks are fully mature now and laying delicious eggs. Ask us about duck eggs.

Broilers

The meat birds kept little ones and grown ups entertained. They grew practically before our eyes devouring a new section of fresh pasture every day. They only had one bad day, which was a bad day for us as well. But we honor their sacrifice by being respectful at the dinner table. We are thankful for our food and very proud to raise it ourselves.





The Road to Self Reliance

After almost two years of country living the rewards have far exceeded the frustrations. In our distrust of the food system, our desire to be more sustainable, and our disdain for consumerism, we have become quite independent. In 2015 we grew 745 lbs of food in our garden. We have a good supply of vegetables in storage and more winter vegetables still in the ground. We froze and canned much of what we harvested and did the same with the fruits we bought from local farmers (Amanda's Blueberry-Lime jam and our family Strawberry jam even got prizes at the county fair!) We also produced a good amount of chicken meat, plenty still frozen for winter consumption, and our layers have provided us eggs non-stop. Our edible perennials, including vegetables and fruit trees, might take a few years to mature but when that happens we are going to be relatively secure as far as food is concerned.

There is a lot of work involved in all of this. There is a great deal of sacrifice and so much yet to learn. But all this commitment is really making us enjoy life in ways we could have never imagined. First of all, this lifestyle has

given us a perspective of what it takes to survive.

Food is a necessity that we take for granted. It is one of the fundamental ways in which we are connected with the environment, with ourselves, and with other people. Yet, we often allow ourselves to be guided by the illusion that food just happens and thus we have no respect for it.

Growing and raising our own food has also taught us a great deal about relationships. By simply observing how elements interact in an ecosystem, we've come to understand that we are also a part of the ecosystem and that we can't really force nature into just pleasing us. It is the other way around and this is huge because it has tremendous moral implications spanning from why it makes sense to eat local and seasonally to why we must get along with our neighbors, even when they think differently than we do.

Interestingly, this commonsensical worldview lines up nicely with our religious views pretty much every step of the way. So, if you ask us what we do, we will respond we are caring for the earth and the people.

Sharing the Bounty

Eggs

Thanks for your business. We are honored that you have enjoyed our eggs. The ladies are picking up the pace and we are collecting enough eggs to be able to offer them to you again. Also, we are introducing GMO-free, pasture raised, duck eggs this season. Richer taste, same quality.



Chicken

Are you interested in pasture-raised, GMO-free, chicken meat? We can raise and process some for you. We will be raising the popular Cornish Cross (large big-breasted bird) as well as some Red Rangers (a more flavorful heritage breed). If interested, let us know ASAP as we will be ordering baby chicks soon.

From the Nursery

Growing some food this year? We are delighted to offer seedlings to help you start your garden. We are planting over 70 different varieties of vegetables and herbs and will have extras to sell. We can sell individual plants or create a guild kit for you.



CSA

We have heard you! Many thanks to those of you who bought our vegetables last year. For the 2016 season we will be offering subscriptions to our produce. See next page for details.

CSA Subscriptions

Our agricultural success last year has given us the encouragement and confidence to offer a limited number of [Community Supported Agriculture](#) (CSA) shares this coming season. In essence we offer a weekly delivery of fresh vegetables and/or other homestead goods starting in late May or early June and running until late September (16 to 18 weeks). The content of the CSA baskets will vary from week to week depending on what is in season. Typically, the content of baskets will be smaller at the beginning of the growing season, consisting mostly of greens, but the amounts will increase as the main crops come into harvest. Towards the end of the season there will be lots of vegetables that can be stored for the winter.

We will offer the freshest produce grown free of artificial fertilizers and chemical pesticides or herbicides. All of our seeds are GMO free and Organic Certified. We are growing approximately 70 different varieties of heirloom vegetables, greens and herbs.

We are offering two different subscriptions options: 1) a full share serves approximately 3-4 people and costs \$355 (about \$20/week). 2) a half share serves approximately 1-2 people and costs \$215 (about \$12.50/week).

Depending on your preference we will deliver on Tuesdays or Fridays. We are happy to home deliver for free to those of you on the Port Republic/JMU vicinity. Others are welcome to pick up directly at our farm in Grottoes or from the home of other subscribers.

FAQ

What kind of vegetables will you be growing?

We are planning to grow a variety of leafy greens, including lettuces, arugula, kales, spinach, Swiss chard, collards, and more. We will also plan to grow several varieties of tomatoes, peppers, summer and winter squashes, peas (sugar snaps and shelling), green beans, onions, cabbages, culinary herbs, root vegetables, and more...

Do we pay our subscription in advance?

Yes, your subscription will enable us to pay for the upfront cost of seeds and equipment. For example, in order for us to protect our crops from pests, we rely on fabrics (cover crops) that will keep insects from eating or laying eggs on our plants. These fabrics are installed early on and require an extra investment on our side that we can only afford to do commercially with your upfront payment.

What happens if it rains a lot and your crops drown?

It could certainly happen and we will be devastated, especially our children who are investing long hours preparing the soil, planting, weeding, picking up bugs, applying compost, watering, and so forth. You'll know that we've tried hard and we will do anything possible to share with you whatever we have. You'll also see other farmers struggling with the same issues and we hope that you can be sympathetic with us understanding that Mother Nature is ultimately in charge.

CSA Subscriptions *cont.*

How to Subscribe

If you would like to know more or are interested in subscribing to our CSA, please let us know as soon as possible. Because this is our first year marketing our produce we will only accept a few subscriptions. (That is the reason why the price of our subscriptions is significantly lower than most of the long-established CSA programs in the community).

For questions or subscriptions, send us an email at saintisidorehomestead@gmail.com or call us at (540) 810-4535. Please indicate if you are interested in a full or a half share. To reserve, you will pay a \$100 deposit now with the remaining balance due on April 1.

Alternatively, fill out and mail the form below

Saint Isidore Homestead CSA (2016)

Name _____

Address _____ Phone # _____

_____ Email _____

Type of subscription: Full Share (\$355.00) _____ Half Share (\$215.00) _____

Delivery/Pick up day: Tuesday _____ Friday _____

Payment Options:

Deposit \$100,00 (Due now) + Remaining Balance (Due April 1) OR
Full Payment (Due now)

Mail this form along with a check payable to: Pedro Aponte
9072 Old County Road
Grottoes, VA 24441