



FROM OUR FARM TO YOUR KITCHEN

Common Hands Farm

Hudson, NY

Biodynamic farmers manage their farms –including fields, woods, wetlands, plants, animals and people—as a self-contained, self-sustaining organism. They don't use GMOs, synthetic chemicals, fertilizers or pesticides.

(Source: Biodynamic Association)

When Common Hands Farm joined Down to Earth Farmers Markets, we asked co-owner Tess Parker what she most wanted people to know about their farm. She replied, “We’re a young couple who started from nothing. Now, five years later and counting, we have a farm that grows food in the closest relationship to nature as we possibly can.”

Tess, together with her partner, Dan McManus, practices biodynamic farming. Founded in the early 20th century by Rudolf Steiner, the basis of biodynamic farming is to observe nature and cultivate crops in partnership with natural cycles. “We work with lunar phases in our planting,” Tess explains, “And we spray herbal concoctions to enliven the nutrients in the soil. Our goal is to boost the immune system of the soil and of the Earth. As Steiner said, ‘to grow food with the highest nutrients and vitality possible.’”

Every year, Tess and Dan welcome apprentices on the farm, and together the crew explores a range of possibility in their crops. They grow many farmers market favorites, such as greens, tomatoes, peppers, carrots, and bright flowers. Yet they also experiment with less common crops for the Northeast – Korean eggplants, radish beans, and celtuce, for example. For those of us who love to learn something new everyday, Tess explains that celtuce is a cross between celery and lettuce. “It’s such fun to bring



“We feel called to do this.” – Tess Parker

new produce for people from the field to the market,” she adds.

In the future, Dan and Tess plan to expand the farm’s educational programming and collaborate with the Primrose Hill School, which is based in Steiner’s Waldorf philosophy of education. To do so, they will move their farm from outside Hudson to Rhinebeck in 2016. With this move, they also plan to introduce livestock – including cows, chicken, pigs, and sheep -- into the farm.

Through it all, they have the curiosity to keep learning. “I love so many things about farming,” Tess says, “Especially the extent to which all the pieces fit together. From the people to the soil health, weather, mechanics, and other things, there are many factors that contribute to the harvest.”



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