

“Bloody Butcher” Corn Sells Out Fast

Susan Fox likes her cornmeal red. Her Bloody Butcher heirloom corn has kernels in shades of red and grinds up to a burgundy color. Others like it as well. She and her husband Alan sell out of their cornmeal and seed every year, even though they grow between 400 and 500 lbs. of it.

“Due to bad weather, we only had a third of a crop last year,” she says. “We sold out even faster.”

Fox says Bloody Butcher corn can be eaten on the cob when young or left to dry. She sells some of her corn to area bakers who grind their own cornmeal.

Bloody Butcher corn grows between 10 and 14 ft. tall, depending on the year. The dent corn has two 9 to 10-in. ears per stalk and can vary from red to almost black in kernel color.

“We ordered our first seed from R. H.

Shumway,” recalls Fox. “Originally we were going to raise it for animal feed, but when we saw how pretty it was, we decided it was good enough for us to eat.”

Fox and her husband have a small farm with 4 acres. They milk goats, raise Berkshire hogs, grow shitake mushrooms, berries, vegetables and more for market. In addition, they make and sell handcrafted pottery, dream catchers and other items, and also teach craft workshops.

The corn is harvested by hand. They tie the shucks back to hang the ears for air-drying. When dry, they shell them by hand. Shucks are used to make old-fashioned cornhusk dolls as well as specialty handmade paper. They even make jelly from the corncobs.

Most of their corn is sold in small batches as freshly ground cornmeal through the local farmers market, and through a website



Alan and Susan Fox sell some of their Bloody Butcher heirloom corn to area bakers, who grind their own cornmeal. The kernels come in shades of red and grind into a burgundy color.

called Local Harvest. They’ve even sold the shelled corn to a North Carolina brewery for a specialty beer.

Fox’s Bloody Butcher seed starts at \$1.50 for a 25-seed packet with a pack of 75 seeds selling for \$3.50. Bulk seed can be ordered in advance and sells for \$20/lb. Cornmeal sells for \$4/lb. and is ground fresh in their

state-certified Mountain Kitchen and Farm Store.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, The Mushroom Hut @ Fox Farms, 54 Labrador Lane, Burnsville, N.C. 28714 (ph 828 682-1405; yanceyfoxfarms@frontier.com; www.themushroomhutfoxfarms.webs.com).

Wisconsin Farmers Raising Atlantic Salmon

Kent Nelson and his wife Kristen are intent on succeeding as a “first of its kind” Atlantic Salmon fishery in the central U.S. The Nelson’s farm is located a mile east of the Mississippi at the outlet of a fresh-water spring near Eastman, Wis.

“We bought the land and ponds in 1990 and it took us 2 years to clear brush and clean up the hatchery,” says Kent. “Then we raised trout for several years until the market went south.”

In 2010 they began looking for salmon eggs and located a supplier who sold them 35,000 eggs for \$4,500. “It was a big investment but we went out on a limb to give it a try. Those eggs hatched in the next month and now we’ve got a good crop of salmon.”

Kent and his wife both care for the fish, which require feeding 2 to 3 times a day. Kristen feeds them in the morning before she goes to work, and Kent feeds them in the evening after he returns from his work. They feed the fish by hand, scattering feed onto the pond from shore.

Nelson says that raising salmon, like any farming enterprise, has its challenges and risks. “We’re raising a saltwater fish in a fresh-water setting, so that’s the first obstacle,” Kent says. “We have to treat the 400 gal. of fresh water a day that enters the ponds so the fish will acclimate to it.” After success with the first hatch, duplicating it with the next batch wasn’t a sure thing. “The fish that hatched from the second batch of eggs we bought all died,” Nelson says. “They didn’t like the feed we were giving them and refused to eat.” Kent says natural predators are also a problem. Eagles and blue herons manage to sneak some of the growing salmon from his ponds. “Everything in the wild has to eat, and it’s tough to protect a small pond from predators that have eyes on it several hours a day,” Nelson says.

Salmon eggs are hatched in trays in the hatchery house, then moved to stainless steel tanks after they’re large enough to swim and eat feed pellets. When the hatchlings are 3 to 4 months old and about 3 in. long they’re moved outside to the raceways where they’re



Kent Nelson and his wife Kristen raise Atlantic Salmon as a crop on their Wisconsin farm. The fish require feeding 2 to 3 times a day.

Photos courtesy, M.P. King – Wisconsin State Journal

fed to a market weight of 2 to 2 1/2 lbs. The Nelsons are selling some of their fish at local markets in Prairie du Chien, and he hopes the majority of the first crop can be sold to a distributor who markets to food service operations. Nelson says they’d probably cost more than imported salmon, but he hopes that “locally-grown” on a label would outweigh the higher cost issue for quality-oriented consumers.

“Salmon are fussier than trout to raise,”

Kent says, “but we’re learning more every day. I think we’ve got a good niche.” In the U.S. more than 90 percent of salmon is imported from Chile, Norway, Scotland and Canada. In Maine, farm-raised Atlantic salmon are that state’s second most valuable fishery product behind lobster.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Kent L. Nelson, 58575 Benhardt Ridge Rd., Eastman, Wis. 54626 (ph 608 874-4547).

Tree Sap Catches On As Healthy Drink

Michael Farrell is spreading the word on tree sap’s potential as a nutrient-packed drink. Author of “The Sugarmaker’s Companion”, Farrell is a longtime consumer of tree sap, also called “tree water”. The idea is to drink the sap right out of the tree instead of boiling it down into syrup.

“I love drinking the sap,” says Farrell, who is a Cornell University extension specialist. “It is absolutely delicious.”

While several companies do market tree water in Canada, it hasn’t been available commercially in the U.S. That is about to change. Feronia Forests, a New York state company, is introducing Vertical Water this spring. It is maple tree sap that has been pasteurized and packaged for use year-round with no need for refrigeration.

“Consumer testing indicates there is a greater sales potential for maple water than for boiled down syrup,” says Farrell.

Tree sap isn’t limited to sugar maples. Farrell says that all maples can be tapped. Non-maples also have potential, including birch, black walnut and butternut trees. Information on tapping these alternatives to maples is included in his book.

Farrell says maple, walnut or birch tree



The idea behind “tree water” is to drink the sap right out of the tree instead of boiling it down into syrup.

sap can be enjoyed year-round. “If you get more than you can drink fresh, simply freeze it,” he says, adding that he recommends pasteurizing it by boiling briefly. “Then you can thaw it out and drink it any time.”

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Michael Farrell, 157 Bear Cub Lane, Lake Placid, N.Y. 12946 (ph 518 523 9337; cell 518 637-7000; mlf36@cornell.edu; http://maple.dnr.cornell.edu). His book is available for \$39.95 plus S&H at Chelsea Green Publishing, Inc. (ph 800 639-4099; www.chelseagreen.com) or on Amazon.com.



Portable 12 by 16-ft. chicken house is mounted on skids so it can be moved to pasture during summer.

Low-Cost Mobile Chicken Coop

Mary Phillips liked the idea of raising a few “free range” chickens to sell to local food markets, but didn’t like the cost involved in using commercial portable chicken coops.

So she had a local farmer build a portable 12 by 16-ft. chicken house, which is mounted on 4-in. skids so it can be moved to pasture during summer. A wood frame pen screened over with chicken wire is attached to the shed.

The building’s metal exterior, insulation, and wallboard provide year-round shelter for up to 30 laying hens. By early May, the building is warm enough to start baby chicks. Sliding all-weather windows and a screen door provide ventilation. A motion light scares off varmints and chicken thieves. Birds

can enter through a small door and “ramp up” to nests and roosts.

“I spent a total of about \$2,000, whereas smaller portable chicken houses that hold only 8 chickens sold at farm stores can sell for as much as \$600 and aren’t insulated or have windows,” says Mary. “The chicken house sets in the back part of our yard, and we dump vegetable scraps, garden trimmings, and even grass clippings into the enclosure for the birds to eat.”

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Mary Phillips, 13438 710th Ave., Zeoring, Iowa 50278 (ph 641 487-7436; cell 515 290-9667).