

Gould's Butter Meat Company sells meat from her organic dairy herd nationwide.



## Farmer Markets Dairy Cows As "Butter Beef"

Jill Gould says meat from dairy cows is so much better she calls it Butter Meat. The upstate New York dairy farmer started the Butter Meat Co., opening a store in her hometown. Her efforts earned her recognition as one of the top 10 national Farm Bureau Ag Innovation Challenge nominees.

"I'm busting myths about meat from dairy cows only being used for ground beef or pet food," says Gould. "Looking at USDA data, a lot of steaks from dairy cows go to fine restaurants. It has the best intramuscular marbling for great taste. Dairy beef really is a better meat."

One of the myths she is busting is that steers and heifers 18 to 24 months of age produce better meat than dual-purpose dairy cattle that may be 3 times that age or more. "Our beef is aged to perfection at 5 to 7 years, giving the fats time to mature and bring out flavors that can't be found in your typical beef," she says. "It is full-flavored meat from animals that have lived long, full lives."

In addition to the marbling and taste, Gould points out that one of the reasons we eat beef is for the iron. Older animals are believed to have higher levels of iron. She is waiting on nutritional analyses to verify not only iron levels but also other minerals, like magnesium, which she expects to be higher.

She has already proven there is a good market for Butter Meat-branded beef, even in a pandemic. "We haven't had a normal

week since we opened on February 1st," says Gould. "By the first of March we were getting calls, 'Do you have beef?' The local retailers didn't have any."

Gould set up curbside pickup, marking down the customer's name, make, model and color of their car, as well as the meat they wanted.

Gould sources the meat she sells from the family's organic dairy herd. She credits the independent slaughterhouses she works with for keeping her in business. Gould talks to her customers about where beef comes from and the effects of consolidation in the beef industry.

She also strengthens her marketing message by differentiating the meat by the age of the animal. If a customer orders a box of cuts, they will find the age of the cow it came from. It is a relatively easy thing for her to do.

"Butter Meat comes from animals that were born and raised on one, possibly two farms," she says.

Gould hopes to extend the Butter Beef brand, sourcing beef from other herds as she builds demand. She is already shipping boxes of beef nationwide. Franchising the brand could be a next step. Meanwhile she hopes to win the \$50,000 Ag Innovation Challenge prize.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Butter Meat Co., 1 North Main St., Perry, N.Y. 14530 (ph 585 204-2788; www.buttermeatco.com).



Lisa Mason Ziegler started growing and selling cut flowers in 1998, and she now offers different online classes about growing and marketing flowers.

## Online Courses Teach Flower Farming

With current high overseas shipping costs, now is a great time to grow flowers for the U.S. market. If you've been in the business or want to start flower farming, you can learn everything you need to know without leaving your house with online courses from The Gardener's Workshop.

"What makes us stand out is all of our schools and courses are taught by seasoned professionals. They give a lot of information, not fluff. Courses are packed with hands-on information," says Lisa Mason Ziegler, owner of the company.

She started growing and selling cut flowers in 1998, and her experience led her to give programs (up to 100 per winter/spring) and write a couple of books. She decided that online courses could provide more detailed and practical information, so she took a course about how to do them, and launched her first course in 2018. Her website offers two types of courses.

The On-Demand courses focus on specific aspects of flower farming such as seed starting, how to put on workshops, and no-till, micro-scale flower farming. The 1 to 4 1/2-hr. courses can be purchased anytime and the buyer owns it forever to refer back to. Prices range from \$20 to \$160.

"There is no instructor interaction but it's easier for people to take little bites," Ziegler says.

The "school" courses are 6 weeks of 2-3 hour video classes per week with enrollment open only once a year. They are more intense

and include a weekly Zoom Q&A coaching session with the instructor during the 6 weeks. Plus, after school, students continue to network in a closed Facebook group with the instructor checking in. Topics cover the basics of growing in hoop and greenhouses, growing and marketing for weddings, and how florists can source locally grown flowers. The next class being offered is Growing Cut-Flower Crops in Hoop and Greenhouses with registration from November 19-23. Prices range from \$495-\$695.

Ziegler suggests checking out the website and requesting to be notified for future registration dates.

She notes that students in the Facebook group are getting early calls to buy all their flowers this year, so there are plenty of opportunities for flower farmers.

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The Gardener's Workshop has online classes, a website, a Facebook page, and podcasts available about flower farming.

## Duck Eggs Added To Diversify Small Farm

If you want birds for your own use or are thinking of selling eggs, consider raising ducks, says Katie Bell, who owns Simple Farm with her family in Charlestown, Ind., raising flowers, produce and eggs for sale.

"Their eggs are delicious, tasting rich and creamy. The amount of bugs they consume is incredible, and any patch of ground you pasture them on will benefit from their nitrogen rich manure," Bell says.

She had experience raising them in the suburbs with her brother when they were growing up. When she and her husband bought 4 1/2 acres in the country they purchased ducks to keep the tick population down.

"Ducks are a great choice because overall they are prone to much less disease than chickens, turkeys or guineas," she says.

The most challenging part is during

brooding because they are very messy, spilling and playing in water. She refreshes bedding often by sprinkling dry bedding on top. The Bells use portable fencing - poultry netting attached to stakes - that is moved to new pasture each week, and they provide plenty of water to drink and play in. To protect them from predators, the ducks are put in a small building every night. They typically lay eggs in the corners for Bell to gather in the morning.

"They will be highly productive for 2 to 3 years, then their production will drop off a bit every year. However, the older they are the larger their eggs typically are. If you are a small operation, it works well to stagger your flock by ordering ducklings once or twice a year and banding them (with large different-colored leg bands, properly sized for ducks) so you always have a batch beginning to lay, and you also always know which ducks are your oldest ones. If you keep accurate records of which ducks are which age you can sell your oldest as 'mature laying ducks' to local farms or families, or even as 'live stew ducks' for making broths and soups," Bell says.

Marketing is another challenge, mainly to educate people about duck eggs.

"Duck eggs boast nearly 9 grams of protein

(compared to 6.28 grams in chicken eggs); they are nutrient dense and creamy. They excel when used in baked goods as they moisten and add loft to cakes and breads. Also, many people with autoimmune disorders or chicken egg allergies buy duck eggs from us. However, we were clear that they should check with their medical professional first," Bell explains.

She has sold wholesale to restaurants, grocery stores and food buying clubs (\$3/half dozen) and direct at farmers markets (\$6/half dozen). Two duck eggs equal three chicken eggs.

The White Layer Duck breed worked well for the Bells. They are good layers, and somewhat nervous so they were easy to herd. This year, Bell wants to try Indian Runner ducks, which are known for foraging and egg-laying.

"Choose a trusted hatchery. Our favorite hatchery to order from has been Metzger Farms, (Vol. 42; Issue 3) located in California," she says.

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Duck eggs have more protein than chicken eggs, and work well in baked goods.