

Locally Grown Real Food, Real Farms, Real People: Neuner Brothers

The Neuner brothers, Dan, Jerry and Ted, raise hogs for the Ozark Mountain Pork Cooperative, which is devoted to sustainable practices each farmer can be proud of.

The Neuners live and work with their families in a picturesque valley in the Ozark Mountains. The brothers are all quiet. As they stand atop a hill on their farm, most of the noise comes from the kids playing and the hogs grunting. Only Ted steps up to comment on their work.

“Competition with the factory farms, as we call them, keeps our prices low despite the fact that our hogs are raised certified humane,” Ted said. “Certified humane means that our methods are 3rd party audited for compliance. There’s even a web site that explains in detail what we do. It takes a lot of extra care and effort to raise hogs this way. Companies are using words like all natural or fresh or whatever buzz word is popular right now, but none of those words have specific criteria behind them. It would be good if they did.”

About 400 hogs call these hillsides home. They are scattered about, and unlike the atmosphere around the long, low buildings of the large swine production facilities, there is no odor in the air. The Neuner brothers care about the well being of their hogs. The hogs are raised on pasture and in deeply bedded huts. All of their hogs are free of subtherapeutic antibiotics, animal by-products and growth promotants.

Ted’s wife, Debbie said, “Ted and his brothers are really proud of this farm and their farming practices. The Neuner Family has been around here since the early 1800s. They take the idea of sustainable farming very seriously because they want to pass the farm to their children. Good stewardship means that we’re concerned about keeping the ground water and the earth clean. We are a family oriented operation, and want to feel good about what we do.”

The original portion of the farm belonged to the boys’ grandfather and grandmother, Joseph and Anna Von Lehman Neuner, and was homesteaded in 1879. Later the Neuner brothers purchased an additional 150 acres adjacent to their property. Today they are a part of the 52-member Ozark Mountain Pork Co-op which oversees production standards for all of their products.

The Ozark Mountain Pork Cooperative believes that if they start with pork raised this carefully, their production practices deserve the same consideration. They start in their USDA inspected facility and cut the ham by hand then old-fashioned sugar-cure it and finally smoke the ham using hickory wood. They even developed a method for using real maple sugar for their curing process.

Debbie Neuner, who kept her children, Grant, Leo and Emma rounded up for the pictures said, “There are so many meaningless slogans and ads today that I think people are dubious of what they see and read. I’d like to see Good Natured Family Farms change their slogan to Real Food, Real Farms, Real People. Because that’s what we really are.”

NeunerFamily: (Left to Right – Back row first) Dan, Jerry, Debbie, Leo, Ted
(Front row) Grant, Emma
OzarkMtnPork: (Left to Right) Dan, Jerry, Grant, Ted Neuner
TheNeuner Brothers: Ted, Jerry and Dan Neuner