

LOCALLY GROWN

Fulton Community Farms

Got a Special Grilled Chicken Recipe? Start with a Special Chicken.

Imagine a farm in the late 1800s-power is provided by horses, light comes from lanterns and farms use none of the chemicals that large, industrial farms use today. That image describes the Fulton Amish community farms, located in southeast Kansas, about twenty miles north of Fort Scott.

One of the fifteen families that make up this community is Noah and Mary Hochstetler. Noah and Mary purchased a farm and moved to Fulton, KS from Tomah, Wisconsin on May 10, 2006. They have eleven children- Amos, Perry, Danny, Fannie, Lizzie, Levi, Ida, Menno, Esther, Mattie, and Moses- of which seven still live at home. The Hochstetler family had a dairy in Wisconsin, but moved to southeast Kansas due to the increasing cost of land prices. Their children were growing and wanting to start their own farms. Two of their married children, Fannie and Lizzie and their husbands have purchased farms, about a mile down the road. Everyone agreed that they like the shorter winters of southeast Kansas and the generous hospitality and friendliness of everyone.

Today, much of the conversation throughout this small community revolves around the Hochstetler's chickens that are sold to Hen House Markets in Kansas City. In November, 2006, Noah and Mary Hochstetler joined the Good Natured Family Farms alliance and began raising free-range chickens. The chickens are raised without antibiotics, growth hormones, or coccidiostats. The chickens are fed a 100% vegetarian diet and are free-ranged. With the Hochstetler's commitment to natural farming practices and animal compassion, they manage their production to minimize stress to the chickens and avoid exposure to the chemicals commonly required in larger, commercial production operations. The chickens are locally processed in a small USDA processing plant in Uniontown, KS, about 20 miles from the Hochstetler farm. The Hochstetler family appreciates the idea that they are able to help hand process the chickens at the processing plant. "This lets us know the quality of the final product and if we need to make any changes in production," explains Mary. "Our daughter, Lizzie, recently got married, and we had 200 friends and relatives at the wedding. Of course, we had fried chicken, and everyone raved about how tender and flavorful the chicken was. It really made our family proud," says Mary.