

## **Rutland Herald & Times Argus:**

### **At Turkey Hill Farm, traditional farming and eating principles foster sustainability and health**

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The fire crackles and the sap gurgles in the Grimm evaporator, a 50-some-year-old relic of an earlier generation of sugar makers. Visitors to the sugarhouse must speak up to make themselves heard over the sound of sap distilling into maple syrup. Stuart Osha adds a pat of butter to the bubbling sap, "to calm the boiling," he explains. "Old-timers used lard," he adds with a smile, his blue eyes bright. Here at **Turkey Hill Farm** in Randolph Center, which Osha **farms** with his wife, Margaret, lard is revered as "the new health food."

On their 50-acre homestead, Stuart and Margaret are reviving traditional farming - and eating - practices. Margaret uses a team of horses to collect sap from steel buckets that hang from taps on the maple trees. "Maybe it's our imagination, but we think the syrup tastes better," Stuart says of the bucket method.

It's not just about taste. "We think older methods are more sustainable than modern things," Margaret says.

The Oshas have developed the **farm** to support their dedication to tradition. Three dairy cows provide raw milk which the Oshas drink and sell, and from which they make cheese and cultured dairy products. Pigs provide meat and lard; chickens, eggs and meat; and animal bones become the foundation of nutrient-dense broths and stocks for soups and stews.

The Oshas practice and promote a traditional way of eating based on the research of Weston A. Price, a 20th century dentist who discovered that, in indigenous communities with traditional diets high in animal protein and fat-soluble vitamins, people had healthier teeth and higher disease resistance.

The Price philosophy promotes a diet that includes

pasture-fed meat, raw and fermented dairy products, soaked and sprouted grains and legumes, meat stocks made from bones, and animal fats like butter and lard.

Lard, along with other saturated animal fats, carries vitamins A and D, required for the nervous system to function properly, according to the Price foundation. The extra Vitamin D in lard is a boon in sun-starved Vermont winters, Stuart says, though their dedication to the Price diet is about more than just extra vitamins.

The Price philosophy "believes in real food, and grass-based agriculture, which is healthy farming," Margaret explains. For these two longtime Vermont farmers, this connection is vital for the health of their land, their animals - and themselves.

When Stuart was diagnosed with a life-threatening illness some years ago, the couple adopted the Price diet principles. Stuart's health improved dramatically, to the point that his doctor pronounced him "cured."

"I went through some horrible years," Stuart says, "and I've never been this healthy or had this stamina." Indeed, his energy - after waking at 5 a.m. to do **farm** chores, day after day - belies his 60-some years.

The Oshas are committed to sharing their healthy farming and eating practices with their community. They sell raw milk, naturally raised meat and eggs, and lard from the "moo-tique" attached to their farmhouse.

In their farmhouse kitchen, Margaret teaches a variety of cooking classes to help others learn how to implement the Price eating principles, and eat well from what can be grown locally.

In April, Margaret teaches her mother's and grandmother's recipes for maple cream sticky buns and maple doughnuts. May classes will focus on gathering and preparing a lunch from wild edibles foraged on the **farm**, and participants will learn how to make raw-milk crème fraîche and fromage blanc.

June classes are centered on making dairy products like butter, soft cheese and ice cream. In August and

September, cooking and preserving the bounty of the summer garden will be featured. Most classes feature a light lunch, in addition to tasting the goodies concocted in the kitchen.

While the educational mission of the **farm** is primary in their minds, the quality of their food is no distant second. Stepping away from the evaporator to taste a batch of syrup, Stuart takes a moment to comment on the **farm**-fresh meals he and Margaret share.

"Awesome," he says.

Sylvia Fagin writes about local food and agriculture. Contact her via her blog "Aar, Naam ~ Come, Eat," at [sylviafagin.wordpress.com](http://sylviafagin.wordpress.com), or via email at [sylviafagin@yahoo.com](mailto:sylviafagin@yahoo.com).

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