Who we are:

About ten years ago my wife, Sharon, and I decided we wanted to live on a homestead for several reasons. One, we believe great health is related to great quality food, physical and mental activity, and lower stress. We love gardening, quality dining, and learning to be more self-sufficient. Sharon loves small animals and cooking from scratch; my son, Peter, and I enjoy the meals. We strive to keep our medical expenses, taxes, and fitness membership fees low, so five years ago we purchased a 19 acre homestead in rural Polk County, Missouri. As we built out our beds and orchards, we discovered new muscles, learned so much through success and failure, provided our family with 70% of its food and medicine, and enjoyed deliciously fresh meals every day that consistently surpass our wildest expectations. Looking forward, we hope to share the harvest, healthy lifestyle and knowledge with others in the community.

Our Methods:

Managing a garden requires healthy physical and mental activity daily which produce a healthy diet. The inputs and outputs complement each other and are aligned to our goals.

Our practices are similar, I think, to what has been called “permaculture”. Our flock of hens, rotated to fresh pasture daily, produce delicious eggs, but also fertilize, till, and remove insect pests from our garden beds. The beds ARE the pasture post-harvest. The surplus eggs are sold to the community to cover the cost of the high grade supplemental feed the hens require.

We do not spray our plants with pesticide, nor do we control weeds with herbicides. Rather we employ organic methods such as crop rotation, companion planting, floating row cover, and lots of old-fashioned hand-picking. We initially formed our beds with cardboard covered with 20” of hay from our pasture, then dug out the remaining Bermuda and Johnson grass by hand. We plant cover crops to enrich the soil and prevent the germination of weed seeds. We use Rogue hoes to remove stray weeds forcibly.

Our orchard, vineyard, and berry patches are covered by a rich humus created from thick layers of wood chips frequently dumped on our homestead by a local tree removal services. Stray weeds still plant themselves in the rich mulch, but pull out easily after a rain. We do use an organic fungicide as needed.

What we produce:

Vegetables and herbs, such as tomatoes, a large variety of peppers including Paprika Alma (for Hungarian Goulash), pepitos, and large hot jalapenos for stuffing. Potatoes, sweet potatoes, corn, beets, onions, carrots, cabbage, Brussel sprouts, broccoli, cauliflower, watermelon, cantaloupe, butternut squash, spaghetti squash, zucchini and pumpkin. Besides eggs, we raise chickens and turkeys for meat.

Future plans:

We have been focused on getting the homestead productive and manageable, but hope to get more connected to serve and be served by our community. I have kept my day job near Chicago and commute there twice a month. I think it would be especially cool to provide some 417 area chefs with specialty produce fresh in season. We’d like to expand into livestock, rabbits, bee keeping, sustainable timber harvest, and improve the quality of our hay. Maybe someday will we operate a small batch brewery with hops and barley grown on our homestead. We are just getting started…