



"I was afraid I would lose the relationship with the cows."

- Dairy Farmer Rick Adamski on his reservations over putting in a milking parlor

News from the Farm

Welcome to Stoney Acres CSA Week 13, 2019! Let me begin by apologizing for not giving you a new recipe and back page last week. Tuesday evening or Wednesday morning one of my babies had an "accident" with my laptop and the touchscreen was going berserk. I was barely able to peek out "News from the farm" and "In Your Box". I try to put a new recipe in every week. Once in a while I recycle one from the 13 years of newsletters I've written. I always try to focus on things in the box, with an emphasis on the more obscure items. The last couple years I've tried to keep things simple. Easy stir-frys with maybe a pinch of flair (Adding fresh mint to glazed carrots changed my life.) Being a vegetable farmer who sells his produce directly has made me a better cook. I hope being in the CSA has done the same for you. Recipes are another small way to aid that quality. In the Field: Tomatoes! Tomatoes! Tomatoes! You received the trifecta of Romas, Cherries, and Heirlooms in your box this week, and I'm inviting people to pick starting next week Monday. My own sauce train is chugging and looks like it will reach its destination, but please call or text before you come. Lastly, with the resignation of Sean Duffy this past weekend a number of people have asked me if I am running for the 7th Congressional Seat. It is something I think about and am flattered to be asked. I feel like I am of Northcentral Wisconsin, Love Northcentral Wisconsin, want to grow and fulfill it, and have a voice and a work ethic that could win it and represent it well. But my first priority is my children and I need to be present as much as I can to give them what they need and watch them grow. My official statement is that I need to make sure Riley makes his layups. My children are my life. **Have a delicious week- Tony, Riley, Ted and Maple**

In Your Box

Onions

Carrots

Roma Tomatoes

Broccoli

Cherry Tomatoes

Cilantro

celery

Potatoes

Basil

Heirloom Tomatoes

Next Week's Best Guess:

Kale, celery, broccoli onions, tomatoes, Melons, carrots

Pizza specials of the week –

Veginald VelJohnson- Roasted fennel zucchini, caramelized onions, kale.. **Romona the Pesto** – Basil pesto base, maple cured flecked ham, roasted cherry tomatoes, Micro Greens and parm in post. **Betty Draper** – Roasted Eggplant, Sausage, Roasted Fennel, Parm in post. **Margarita**

- Fresh Mozz, Fresh heirloom tomato, fresh basil in Post. **Billy's Dill Weed** – Bacon, LeClare Farm Goat Cheese, and Dill. **It's All Clover Now Baby Blue** – Kale, bacon, Blue Cheese, Basil Pesto, Marathon Red Clover in Post

Reckoning a Romance with the Family Farm

By Tony @ Stoney

(Author's Note: this is a rewrite from a couple years ago, but I've edited it and augmented it with other farmer's stories and insights into romance, beauty, our relationship with work, and the invaluable nature of the family farm.)

I am a defender of the family farm. As a business, as an institution, as a source of food, as a home. I have lamented its decline, and fought for its survival and renewal. In the process of confronting agribusinesses' relentless consolidation of agriculture, I have been called a romantic, or someone transfixed by emotion and imagination, rebelling against inevitable conventions. I wasn't sure how offended I should be, but I thought it was a label I should examine. I believe that the emotions surrounding the family farm are rooted in material advantages ecologically and symbolically that play out over the long term. It is true, the family farm, especially my family farm, is incredibly emotional to me. I have a deeply personal intimate relationship with the history and places of our farm that cause my heart to well up when I travel through them, encounter them, or even think of them.

The Romantic era in literature is based on glorifying natural settings. We think of *Frankenstein* as a monster movie but half of Mary Shelly's original version is filled with flowery natural imagery and worshipful vivid images of natural settings. This is in contrast with Dr. Frankenstein's unnatural work of creating his monster. Today, genetically modified foods, otherwise known as "Frankenfoods", are not simply criticized because of their unnatural domination of the marketplace and unnatural domination of our policy making process, but because of a theological (or romantic), and logical objection to an unnatural imposition on the natural selection of life. I don't criticize GMOs to be alarmist as some in the organic community do. I criticize them to call attention to the fact that when we put the production of our food in a scientific and legal place beyond the reach of the common person, we sacrifice our freedom, our dignity, our soul, and potentially our planet's ability to produce by its own means. (Is that a romantic statement, or what?!?) Ecologically, any good family farmer resists farming fencerow to fencerow because **Conservation is Essential**. Any good family farmer leaves wild spaces on their acreage because life (human or otherwise) doesn't come from a blanket of corn it comes

from the long history of innumerable plants and animals that make up the priority of species or web of life that created and sustains us. That space isn't worthless, it's invaluable. You could say that the idea of human beings raising food for other human beings within a romantic and intimate relationship with nature is the way it should be; or natural. The family farmer's romantic relationship with the land makes it more difficult to exploit and degrade the land. It is at a scale where the land's capacity has to be respected and not diminished especially if it is going to be passed on to its heirs. Because I want my farm to last 1000 years the land becomes a sacred thing. It is this scale that allows me to know spaces intimately, or to put it in a material sense I am better at micromanaging this land because of its relatively small size and my long emotional history with it.

One of the romantic places is the farm is the haymow. Almost all iconography of a family farm has this even though they are functionally going extinct. My understanding of how our haymow should be is based upon my romantic history with it and that romance influences the decisions I make about our farm. Consider the following example: Every year when we make hay I am confronted with the decision to bale using our small square baler or have it custom round baled. The advantages of round baling are obvious: time saved and toil exerted. If we call our neighbor Whitney, he can do 40 acres as fast as we can do 10, you don't need to pull at least 3 (often 4 or 5) people out of the vegetable fields (one baling one unloading, one in the mow), and you don't need to lift the roughly 10,000 45 pound small squares we put up every year. Of course doing our own baling has its advantages, we have the equipment, we don't have to pay the custom fee of 8 dollars a bale, we can store the little squares in our haymow and greatly preserve their quality, but what keeps the little squares flying ultimately is my romantic history with my haymow. I love baling hay, I'm good at it. I can throw a bale 40 feet across the haymow, and unload a load by myself in time to keep my father in wagons on a field two miles away. I feel it has made a man out of me. When I was 16 I mowed and stacked (to keep them off my basketball court) 1700 bales in one day in 90 degree heat. My neighbor friend passed out after 1000, I finished it myself not wanting my jump shot's rage to be limited that fall. Every year I relish the opportunity to show whoever is on the farm that the effort of unloading or mowing 1000 bales in an afternoon is not only possible but something I take in stride. I even have romantic justifications ready when someone asks me why I just don't round bale my beef feed. I tell them that my grandfathers and uncles never boasted to me about how they moved 100 round bales with their tractor, but whenever we walk in the haymow they stare at the space in awe and relay their feats. My haymow holds hay, but it also holds my basketball court, hayforks I've built and my kids build My haymow is not a "biosecurity zone", it's fun, it works, it's glorious. A few years ago we considered a move toward round baling. My parents were in Europe during first crop. I tried making hay for the first time without my dad. I was away from the vegetables on harvest day, the baler broke, the stress mounted, I called Whitney to get 45 acres in before the rain. I hedged and asked where a round baler fell in our investment priorities and put it off. (I still ask myself the round baling question every first crop and use the service more) I hold to small squares because of what I consider to be meaningful work, and because of beauty.

To mow hay is not only an iconic image of a farmer but a sacred act of putting something of yourself, your sweat, your determination into the necessary work of your farm. The haymow arks like a gothic cathedral, stacking hay is my worship. The relationships of our lives define us, and the most romantic moments are the most lasting memories. A few years ago, a farmer friend, Rick Adamski, was telling me about his own romance induced technological dilemma. He had a classic 60 cow station barn where the cows stand in two rows of 30 and the farmer moves four or so milking machines down the line but not before washing and massaging the udder of each cow to get her to let down her milk. Rick had sustained a knee injury in high school, and when he took over the dairy, was torn about the decision of whether or not to put in a milking parlor. In a parlor system the farmer stands in a pit and applies the stationary hanging milking machines to 8 or so cows on each side of him. When those cows are finished they are discharged and the next 16 enter from a holding area. Rick worried he "would lose the relationship with the cows" not to mention the imagery of his cows nestled in their freshly straw bedded stations at night like something out of *Big Red Barn*. In this instance I told Rick I wouldn't think twice about putting in a parlor, not only empathizing with Rick's knees, but seeing the constancy of milking cows (twice a day 365 days a year) as something that needed to be eased. I was able to understand Rick's apprehension. Now we have robotic milkers; soon a farmer's only job will be to tabulate our assets vs. our debt. The technological regime of one family farm vs. another is impactful and interesting, but not my primary concern. The technology employed on a family farm is not what makes it a family farm, rather it is that the family provides the majority of the farm's labor, but when technology alienates us from our work and the race to employ it drives our neighbors off the land it may alienate us from ourselves.

In considering our relationship with our own humanity and its work we must also consider its aesthetic. Another neighbor, Joe Tomandl Sr told me and other farmers that he kept a free stall barn because he learned, and taught his daughter to ballroom dance between waiting for the cows to finish. That is one of the most beautiful things I can imagine. The conditions we choose must have space for this beauty. Little red barns grace Wisconsin's license plates not only because they are more aesthetically pleasing than 10,000 cow manure lagoons, but because of their symbolic significance. They symbolize, hard work, bounty, earnestness, family, history, the American Dream. Weddings take place at beautiful family farms because the farm's natural beauty is a symbol of the couple's natural love for one another. Weddings are not set at factory farms because marriage is not meant to be a symbol of functional domination and profitability. That the family farm is more sustainable or a more democratic form of ownership is an emotional knowledge, but also one based on evidence, logic, and peer-reviewed studies. A primary part of any human experience is to be emotional. If feelings are not inspired by what we do and what goes on around us we may as well be machines. Ultimately my materialism is at the foundation of my romanticism, but it is not a materialism based on technological or capital domination, it is a materialism that demands equality and sustainability as logical necessities for life, liberty and happiness. The romantic expression of the family farm is an expression of my happiness.