



Greetings Friends!

Spring is here and we are gearing up for another exciting year at Miller Brothers Grass Farm! This will be our only formal communication with you, so please take a few moments to read it thoroughly.

First of all, thank you for your support over the past year. We are thankful you have chosen to source your food locally and get to know the people producing it. It is gratifying and encouraging every time we hear, "I just can't eat the meat from the grocery store anymore!"

## **BEEF**

The grass-fed beef industry is growing in popularity among consumers **and** producers. It is pretty simple to sell beef from a cow that has eaten nothing but grass all of its life. It is a whole lot more difficult to sell a 100% grass-fed steak that is tender, juicy, and flavorful. It takes the right cow in the right environment. We take special care in all aspects of management and production to make certain you have a gourmet eating experience every time you prepare our beef.

At the end of February, we had the opportunity to attend the first ever *Grassfed Exchange Seminar and Sale* in South Dakota. An elite group of beef producers brought in cattle that fit a strict protocol for grass-fed beef. We were able to bring home twelve steers that came from a small farm in central Nebraska. These animals should help us fill the gap in beef availability between November and March this coming year. The cattle were raised in exactly the same way we raise our animals, NO antibiotics, NO hormones, and NO grain or grain by-products.

There was a lot of discussion at this seminar about feeding grain by-products to cattle. Feeding by-products is a widely accepted practice in the *conventional* cattle industry. However, a couple of national companies are marketing "grass-fed beef" but allow their cattle to be fed distillers grains from ethanol plants. Not only does this practice compromise the credibility of the grass-fed industry, several studies have shown it can *increase* the incidence of E. coli. Our point is that labels can be misleading! This is why it is so important to know who is producing your food!

Thank you to everyone who has pre-ordered the larger quantities of beef. Our next processing date is set for the second week of August. The 25-lb assortment package will be the only thing we will have available at that time. There will be a limited number available, so order early! Any orders that we cannot fill in August will be filled between November and March. We will keep you updated on exact processing dates if your order falls in that frame. As always, we plan to have ground beef available throughout the year.

## PORK

Miller Brothers is still one of the only farms in southeast Wisconsin offering pastured Berkshire pork. Berkshire pigs are an older heritage breed known for their darker colored meat as well as natural marbling within the meat.

From the 1950s through the 1970s, pork consumption decreased steadily and the diet craze that began in the 1980s sent the industry into a tailspin. As chicken became America's favorite meat, pork producers responded by promoting pork as "the other white meat" and switched from raising tender, flavorful pork to producing pork with as much as 30% less fat. The reduction in fat cut a few calories, but it robbed the pork of intramuscular marbling - where the flavor and juiciness reside. The end result was pork that was tasteless and dry. This is not something that we want to serve friends and family.

We apologize for not being able to accommodate the orders from last fall. Since 2008 we have been sourcing small Berkshire pigs from Steve Deibele at Golden Bear Farm in Kiel, WI. Steve's farm is certified organic, and he raises his animals on pasture just like us. Due to the increased demand for Steve's Berkshire pigs we were unable to buy any pigs from him last fall. We felt very strongly that switching back to "industry standard" pigs meant compromising the quality of the pork that you come to us for.

Over the past couple of years many of you asked about getting brats made without the popular food additive, monosodium glutamate (MSG). Last spring we worked with our processor to find a brat recipe that did not include MSG and it turned out AWESOME! We feel that the flavor of this new recipe is far superior to the old one. From now on ALL brats from Miller Brothers will be MSG free!

Pork will again be sold in assortment packages, and half or whole animals. Individual cuts will only be available if we have anything leftover after assembling assortment packages. The first group of pigs will be arriving at the farm very soon; orders will be filled between August and November.

## CHICKEN

Our pastured broiler production will be increasing again this year. Last season we raised over 600 birds and we are geared up for 1000 this year. We only order chicks to fill the orders we have received. Due to the 8-12 week lag we need orders **now** to know how many chicks to purchase. We are planning on having 250 birds ready for pick-up once a month June-September. Orders are first-come first-serve; once we hit our capacity of 250 birds for a given month, orders will be moved to the next month.

Punctuality at pick-up times will be extremely important this year. Our freezers have to be empty each month to accommodate the next group. We will notify you at least **one week** in advance of your pick-up dates. If you cannot make it during the allotted times please make arrangements to re-schedule. If we do not hear from you within **one week** after the pick-up date we will sell your birds to someone else. **Two weeks** after the pick-up date we will start selling **any** birds that are

not picked up. This gives everyone two weeks to make alternate arrangements, and two weeks to pick up their order.

## EGGS

The biggest obstacle in free range egg production is that laying hens are pretty close to the bottom of the food chain. We won the predator battle last summer with our portable hoop houses, but lost to a weasel this winter. Nearly a third of our laying hens were lost in less than two weeks during January. As a result our layer flock will be under 100 this year. We will “squeeze” these girls all we can! You can pick up eggs at the farm house on Highway K. We have eggs if the sign is up at the end of the driveway. You may also call 262-966-2702 for egg availability. The cooler is located by the front door, serve yourself. Please help keep our cost down by returning egg cartons!

## ODDS AND ENDS

If you have not seen the film, *Food Inc.* yet – get your hands on it. This documentary reveals shocking truths about our nation’s food industry that have been hidden from the American consumer. “*You’ll never look at dinner the same way again.*”

If you are not already doing so, please bring your own box or cooler along when you come out to see us; especially on chicken pick-up days during the summer. Miller Brothers reusable grocery bags are also available for \$2.

All prices will remain the same as last year! At this point in time this also includes all processing fees at Cedar Road Meats, located in Iron Ridge. Marvin and Barb Malterer at Cedar Road Meats have one of the only small processing facilities left in our area – the only one we trust to handle our animals. They are wonderful people to work with; please take the time to say thank you when you see them this year. Our business cannot survive without small scale facilities like these. If you don’t make it out to Iron Ridge, look for them at the Brookfield Farmers Market every Saturday beginning in May.

At this time we do not require a deposit for the larger quantities of beef and pork. We like this policy; it’s less work! We trust that if you tell us you want a half-cow you mean it. Please follow through with your order! We will give you several weeks notice of the exact processing dates. If we do not hear back from you we will make arrangements with another customer.

This newsletter and order form will be distributed electronically **only** this year. We have done our best to gather up everyone’s email addresses over the past year. If you know of anyone we have forgotten about, or anyone you think would be interested in hearing about us, feel free to forward this to them. Both the newsletter and order form will be posted on our website as well. Please use the “Email to MBGF” button located in the upper right corner of the order blank to return your completed form. If you do not get an email confirmation that your order was received within a couple of days, please call us. If you have pre-ordered please take a minute to fill out the form to confirm your order.

Again, thank you for your support over the past year. Please call or email us with any comments, criticisms and encouragements. Remember everything is first come first serve; when we have reached our capacity that's it. We are anxious to see all of you this season!

Thank you!

Luke, Nick and Mark Miller