




ALWAYS SOMETHING FARM FARM TO FORK

Dedicated to
Ethan Michael Parkot
and his wonderful family
(including those with two legs and those with four)



As you drive down the roads leading to Sumner Road the homes get further apart and the animals in the yards become more the norm. You glance to your right as Siri tells you that you have arrived at your destination, and your journey begins.



I have been coming out to the farm for over a year now, to get out of a city shut down by a pandemic. It's great here. I chose to do a "Farm to Fork" project and along the way I got to know the most remarkable young man and his dad, allow me to introduce you to Ethan, age 9 and dad, Mike.





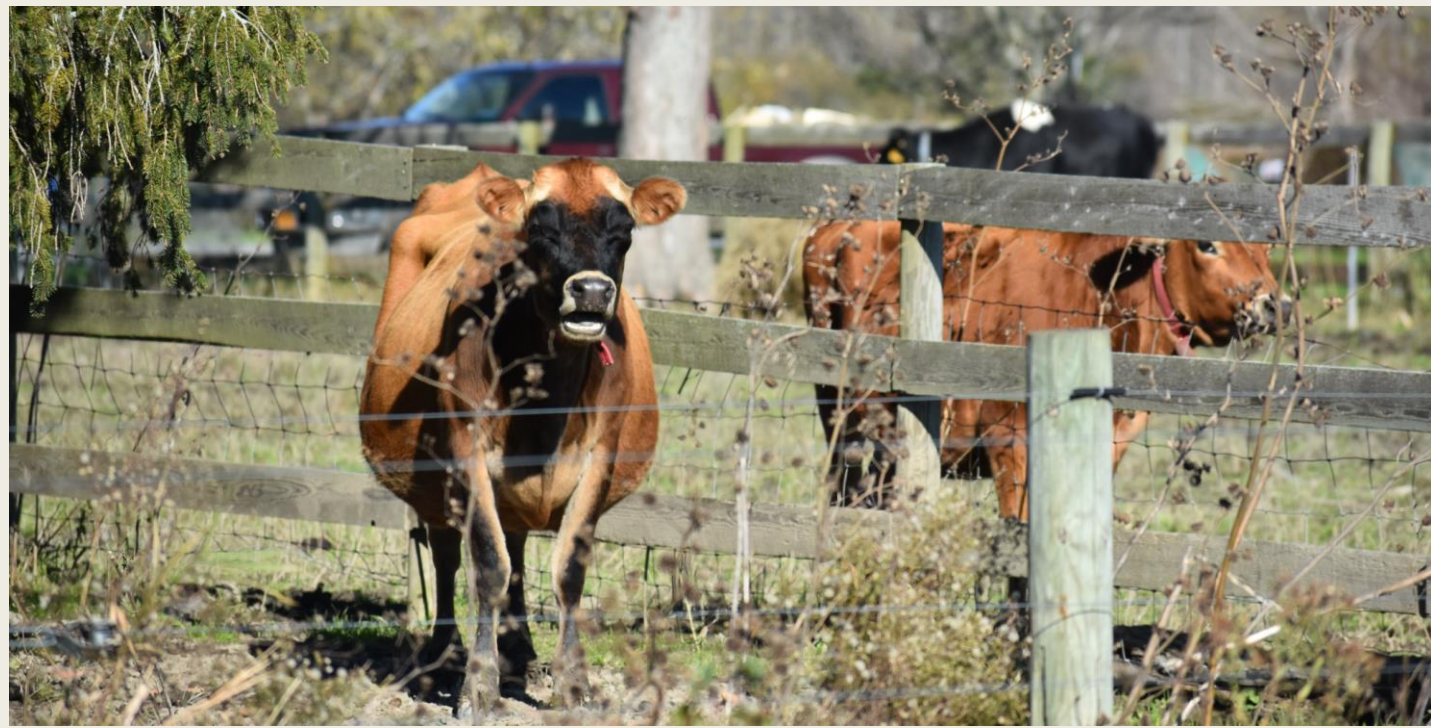
Josh is always on the move, how he keeps up with his older and much bigger brothers is fantastic to watch.



One of the best parts of coming out to the farm is seeing these three guys. The oldest, Ethan is pretty amazing, he tends after animals, helps with a gazillion chores both before and after school and plays wonderful games full of imagination with his brothers. Grant, 6, is so much fun to talk with, always has fantastic stories about what has been going on with the three of them. And then there is Joshua, 2, last but definitely not least, the Energizer bunny could not keep up with this kid.



Liberty, aka Libby, Man's (or in this case boys') best friend on the farm, is always full of energy and happy to see just about anyone.



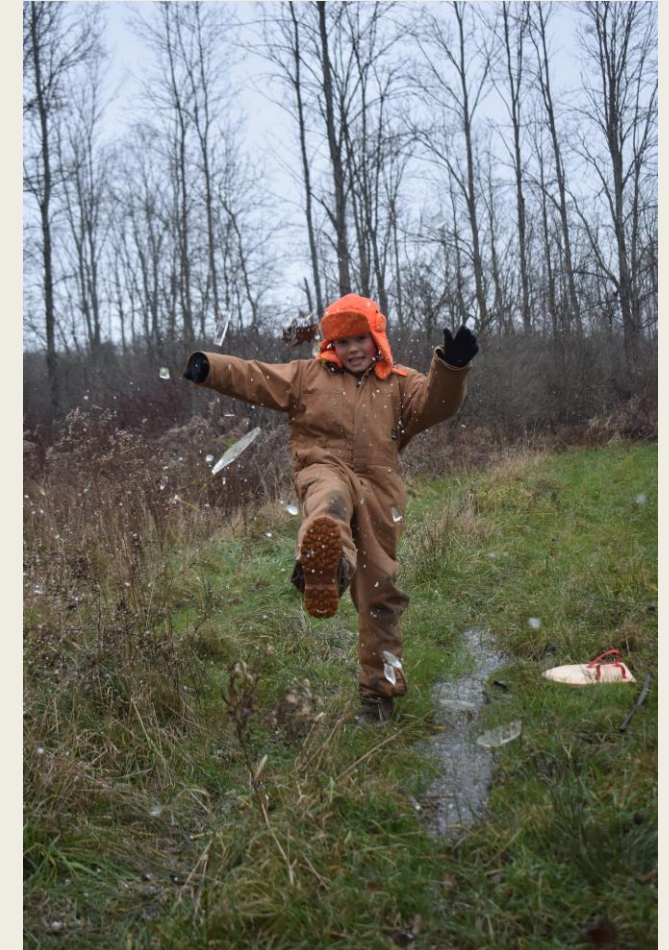
Cows and rabbits are home here too

Ethan (and his dad) raise pigs (and a few other animals depending on what they want to try out), currently there are cows and rabbits and a few laying chickens. They have raised cooking chickens and turkeys in the earlier days on the farm, when Mike and his wife Stephanie first started on their adventure. Once processed, they are sold to local Chefs, who in turn make wonderful sausages, smoked meats and other delicacies, like head cheese and cassoulet. The farm also sells at a few farmers markets and is host to a few markets on the farm featuring other local growers in the summer and fall. Ethan taught me the difference between animals that you breed and those that you eat and how to enjoy a long late fall/early winter walk on the farm in ways I never thought imaginable.



Knocking a couple of the last of the apples out of a tree to enjoy on our exploration of the farm.

Ethan grabbing frozen foam from the waterfall in a creek dammed by beaver.



Kicking huge chunks of ice in mid-air!

While on our big explore we encountered several pigs of various ages and sizes who had broken out of a fenced area in the way, way back of the farm. Ethan was quick to get between me and the rogue animals to protect me in case they charged us. It is a farm, not a petting zoo. The purpose for my visit this time was to watch as Ethan and his dad brought a pig from the field to the barn to get him ready to transport a few days later to Clyde, New York for processing for a local Chef who was having an event the next week starring a pig from The Always Something Farm.



Also, on my last visit, I was formally introduced to several of the breeding animals.
My favorite is Marilyn. She has quite the personality.



On a previous trip, I had met Crystal and her piglets, also very cute in their own right.

By spring many of the pigs pictured here will have become someone's dinner, breakfast, lunch, a midnight snack or perhaps even brunch. A select few will be chosen to be bred, but the majority will be bacon, pulled pork, sausage, prosciutto, mortadella or in some incarnation a part of a wonderful meal. Over the time I have been going out to the farm capturing these images, many of the animals I grew to look for are no longer here. You quickly learn that if they don't have names then you shouldn't get attached to them, for the most part, the named animals have pretty decent job security on the farm.



Crystal is a really great mom,
she is very patient with her babies.

It became time to move the pig from the pen up front (he had been in the back free ranging area a few days prior) to the barn. Well, he kind of had other ideas. After a little coaxing Ethan and Mike got him over to the barn and into a stall next to the horses. He would be there for a few days and then driven to Clyde, to the USDA supervised processor, to be slaughtered and readied for the event in Buffalo the following week.



So what's the deal with Always Something Farm?



Ethan is so great with the animals, kind and gentle. He knows more than most people I have ever met about life and death and taking care of those who depend on you for their survival. Here, he and Mike get the pig into the barn just as it is beginning to snow again.

Well for one thing, the entire life cycle from birth to harvest is attended by Mike, and now Ethan, soon his brothers will be doing the same. All the feed for the animals is sourced locally, if it isn't produced on the farm. The animals get to run, root and get to express their natural behaviors, ones that conventional pigs raised in barns never have the opportunity to explore. Always Something Farm believes that you can taste the difference, and from the cult like following they are beginning to enjoy, many fans of the farm agree.



This is the next time I saw that pig from the farm and Ethan and Mike. Because it was one of Ethan's pigs, he came along with his dad for the event hosted at The Culinary Loft on Amherst Street not far from Grant Street in Buffalo.



Above is Ethan holding the pig's head, during the class the use of the entire pig was taught, even the head is used, nothing is wasted. Right, is Mike carrying the pig on his shoulders, in from his truck to the demonstration kitchen.



Ethan somewhat mesmerized by the cameras and screens, while Chef Bruce Wieszala, and Mike discuss which half of the pig to start with for the class.



Having the demo event on a Monday night (without a Bills game) allowed many of WNY's finest kitchens to send staff and it drew approximately 40 people, including many local executive chefs, their sous chefs and line cooks along with some fabulous home cooks, all who wanted to learn more about home butchering and what's going on at The Always Something Farm. It was a tremendously informative evening enjoyed by all.

Ethan and Mike were able to meet people one on one to answer their questions about the animal and the farm as the host and instructor for the evening, Chef Wieszala, broke it down section by section, explaining the cuts and how to use them in cooking both at home and in a restaurant setting.

When Ethan sells one of his pigs, he splits the money with his dad 50/50, investing some in his new animals, saves some and like any other kid treats himself to something he might want, like the cool wooden shield he used to protect me from the rogue pigs on my previous visit and other fun things that he enjoys.





As everyone was arriving and settling in there were samples of some of the current offerings that Chef is featuring on the fall/winter menu at Chez Ami in The Curtiss Hotel located in downtown Buffalo.





To the left: Chef serving house made charcuterie featuring an amazing mortadella and a few other meats to a guest and simultaneously fielding questions, while his sous chef (above), grills sausage specially prepared for the evening. All pork was from a pig from Always Something Farm.

Charcuterie at Chez Ami on a recent evening, it was delicious!



Here are a few additional images from my time on the farm that I liked but could not find a way to fit them in to the story.



I am not a rural living type person,
not by any stretch of the imagination.

I am beach.

I am mountains.

I am city.

But I do love my time at the farm,
every time I am there
it becomes harder and harder to leave.



Always Something Farm



Sometimes they are so chill and relaxed and other times they are endlessly playful, running around, chasing each other. They like to hang out in smaller groups from what I have noticed. Here are a couple of calmer moments out in the pasture area in the back of the farm in October.



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At the Always
Something Farm even
the weeds are
beautiful.



I adore the piglets, not enough to become a
vegetarian, (because, well – bacon) but they
are just so cute.



Such a face!

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At Always Something Farm Mike & Stephanie Parkot and their adorable children are taking the road less traveled and are killing it!

The Three Musketeers of the Always Something Farm

Ethan, 9 – Grant, 5 – Joshua, 2

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