

**JENNY JACKSON**  
**Jenny Jack Sun Farm – Pine Mountain, Georgia**

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Location: Jenny Jack Sun Farm, Pine Mountain, Georgia

Interviewer: Sara Wood

Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs

Length: Fifty minutes

Project: Women at Work in Georgia

**[Begin Jenny Jackson Interview]**

**00:00:00**

**Sara Wood:** Start by introducing you on the tape and then I'll ask you to introduce yourself. So it's August 8, 2013 and this is Sara Wood with the Southern Foodways Alliance and I'm sitting here with Jenny Jackson of Jenny Jackson Farm and we're in Pine Mountain, Georgia. And I'm wondering if you could say hello, Jenny, and introduce yourself and tell me who you are and what you do.

**00:00:23**

**Jenny Jackson:** Okay. Hi, this is Jenny Jackson. I am the farmer and owner here at Jenny Jack Farm in Pine Mountain. My husband [Chris Jackson] and I together grow on about five acres diverse produce—vegetables, herbs, a few cut flowers, fruit, we have 100 hens for laying and currently five pigs. We market directly through our 140 member CSA [community-supported agriculture] and we have three locations for pick-up all within thirty miles of the farm, the largest being Columbus, which is about thirty miles south of us, LaGrange, which is about twenty miles to the north, and then we have about thirty members that come here to the farm to pick-up.

**00:01:17**

**SW:** And could you tell me your birth date for the record?

**00:01:19**

**JJ:** Sure, April 6, 1982.

00:01:22

**SW:** So Jenny if I have this right, you grew up on this land?

00:01:26

**JJ:** Yes, I grew up across the street at my parents' house and they still live there and they own 160 acres and have allowed us to farm and live on—well, we live on a little ten-acre tract across from the farm and then we're farming five acres.

00:01:49

**SW:** And so can you talk about—I mean did your parents farm the—part of the land when you were growing up?

00:01:54

**JJ:** No, well they were more of like stewards of the land. So the land was in terrible shape when they bought it as far as just being overgrown with invasive species and so there was a lot of work to be done. I can move him if you want me to because he's going to continue to chew on that.

00:02:21

**SW:** Yeah, I'm sorry.

00:02:22

**JJ:** I don't know if that noise is going to be—.

00:02:25

**SW:** It's kind of—it's in there, he's present.

00:02:31

**JJ:** I can just run him up to the dog pen real quick.

00:02:32

**SW:** Is that okay? I'm so sorry. I'm sorry. So you were talking about how your parents were stewards of the land.

00:02:37

**JJ:** Yeah, so they had a big garden and we've always had horses just for—to ride for fun so my dad has grown hay for the horses and he continues to do that. And hunting, he—he likes to plant wildlife plots to bring in the birds and the deer, and he himself is not a big hunter but he allows people to come on the land and hunt occasionally.

00:03:07

**SW:** And how long has it been in your family—this land?

00:03:10

**JJ:** My parents purchased it in the early '80s [1980s]. They came on as caretakers, so my mom was living in Atlanta and my dad was living just over the state line in Alabama, which is only about twenty minutes from here. And they were just drawn to this area because it was quiet and you know just different from home. And they were young hippies looking to homestead and so they found this piece of land which we're currently on now. It was owned by an older gentleman that had cows. And there was a very old house on the property and he was looking for a

caretaker, I believe they found it maybe even through a newspaper article, but they and another young couple came out and lived in the house and took care of the cows and the fencing and my dad convinced my mom to come down ‘cause he told her she could keep her horse here which she was boarding in Atlanta at the time. And so they were just living the good life homesteading. And they came home one day and the house was burned to the ground. It—there was an electrical fire.

**00:04:22**

And so they of course moved off the property into a trailer, but still loved this piece of land so when it became available to buy they purchased it and built their house and luckily never sold it.

**00:04:43**

**SW:** And what are your parents’ names?

**00:04:43**

**JJ:** Maxie and Laura Earl.

**00:04:46**

**SW:** And do you know the name of the man who had—who had—who was on the land before with his cattle?

**00:04:53**

**JJ:** I cannot remember his name, previous to his owning it was the White family which is why this is called White Cemetery Road because right across from my parents' house is a really old cemetery owned by the White family. And the graves date back to the mid-1800s.

**00:05:16**

**SW:** I was going—I was wondering about that—the name of the road if you knew. Can you—do you have any particular memories or stories of growing up on the land, things that you really cherish?

**00:05:26**

**JJ:** Yeah, I mean I just—that's a good word 'cause I do cherish my childhood here. It was—I feel like it was every kid's dream. I had complete and total freedom to ride my horse, my bike, the four-wheeler, to pick blackberries, to help in the garden, which I didn't do nearly enough of. It was just a very fun and free way to grow up. We've got two ponds on the property so we could swim in the lake or fish. It was like endless entertainment.

**00:06:09**

**SW:** What kind of fish did you have?

**00:06:12**

**JJ:** Mostly catfish but also some brim and bass. And we would catch turtles and keep them in our horse bathtub at the—at the barn and have turtle races. Yeah, just so much interaction with nature that I feel like a lot of kids miss out on not growing up in a place like this.

**00:06:35**

**SW:** What was your horse—what’s your horse’s—or what was your horse’s name?

**00:06:38**

**JJ:** I grew up barrel racing and my main horse’s name was Taco.

**00:06:44**

**SW:** When did you start barrel racing?

**00:06:46**

**JJ:** When—probably when I was about ten and did that through college. I was on the UGA [University of Georgia] Rodeo Team for one year. And yeah, that’s how we spent our weekends was going to horseshows in the summer.

**00:07:01**

**SW:** Wow, so when you—as you were growing up here did you ever think about—I mean did you—did you think about or have any interest in maybe doing something with the land when you got older?

**00:07:14**

**JJ:** Yeah, I did. I didn’t have any idea about small diversified farms. I had never been exposed to that—that idea, so that particular plan was not in mind, but I really enjoyed watching my dad cut hay and kind of hearing about the process of what went into that—all the decisions about

when to do it, you know watching the weather, I guess I was always drawn to wanting to do something outside. So I studied horticulture at UGA not really knowing what I wanted to do with it, but I just knew I wanted to have a career outside working with nature.

**00:07:55**

So at the time there really weren't many classes there devoted to food production, but I took the few that were, but it was really just after college when Chris and I traveled to Hawaii as WWOOFers which is an acronym for Willing Workers on Organic Farms that we were exposed to this ideas of small diversified farms as a possible career.

**00:08:25**

**SW:** And what do WWOOFers do and can you talk a little about what a diversified farm is?

**00:08:31**

**JJ:** Okay, yeah, so with the WWOOF program it's something that you can do pretty much anywhere in the world and it's a work trade. So the—the worker generally works a part-time job basically on the farm in exchange for room and board. So it's different with every farm. In Hawaii of course the—the weather and conditions were perfect for camping, so we were offered a tent and basic food in exchange for like twenty-five or thirty hours of work a week. Of course in—in more extreme climates, farmers will offer you know an actual room. Sometimes money is exchanged, but most often it's just the work-trade relationship. And usually it's folks that aren't necessarily seriously pursuing an agriculture education, it's more of a—a good way to travel if you've got—if you want to spend some time in a place and you're willing to put in the hours of work. So we—we really enjoyed that.

00:09:44

But so these diversified farms that we were working on look a little bit like what we're doing here. It's just you know all the labor is done by hand. There's very few machines. We grow over 100 varieties of fruits and vegetables and cut flowers and so keeping it diverse helps—it's kind of like our insurance. If—if something goes wrong, if we have a crop loss, we have lots of other things to fall back on.

00:10:24

**SW:** And can you just tell me quickly where you—what island you guys were on and—and what the name of the farm or a couple names of the farms?

00:10:31

**JJ:** Yeah, I don't—I don't know if I can remember the names of the farms but we—we started off on the big island. That was more of an individual garden and she had banana trees, papaya, avocado, and a small herd of sheep. So we were kind of helping with the fruit orchard and the sheep. The second place we traveled to was Maui and that farm actually had a CSA and she sold at the local farmers' market and she had just a couple of acres of mixed vegetables, fruit and also ginger and turmeric which were interesting. And the third farm we were on was Kauai and that was mostly pineapple.

00:11:23

**SW:** So were you guys out there for a year?

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**JJ:** No, we were only there for about five months.

00:11:30

**SW:** And I guess I should circle back for a second, how did you and Chris meet and did he have an interest in farming?

00:11:36

**JJ:** Yeah, we met at UGA. He was studying education to be a teacher. And we—we met my freshman year and his sophomore year and dated all through college and before we got married I did ask and make sure that he was willing to give farming a go, even—even though I didn't have a clear idea of what type of farm I wanted to have I knew that I wanted to utilize this land and I wanted to grow something. At the time I was thinking blueberries. I didn't realize how important it is to diversify. So you know he—he thought he would be interested. He was at least open to the idea. So that was kind of the okay for me to *[Laughs]*—to commit to a lifelong relationship with him among many other things. But he was open to that so that—that was all I needed.

00:12:36

**SW:** And what did your—I mean I'm wondering how you went—so you guys went to Hawaii and then did you come back and proposition your parents for the farm or how did that work?

00:12:48

**JJ:** Yeah, they were still not familiar with small diversified farms and did not think it was a good idea to farm for a living, especially since we both had you know college degrees and they

just saw it as a hard life and a hard way to make a living. And until we were up and going and they could see that it was going to be successful and we were loving what we were doing it was highly discouraged. **[Laughs]** But I mean my dad tells me weekly now that he couldn't be happier with the way that the land is being used. So you know it's just be unfamiliar with— with—that career choice was what they were hesitant about.

**00:13:42**

**SW:** Were there other women—since this is about women and farming, I don't want to spend too much time, just—but I am curious, were there other women that—that—who you knew that were farming at the time when you started?

**00:13:57**

**JJ:** Well, one of the farms we worked on Hawaii that was run by a woman. The Glovers in Douglasville were our mentors. That—they are really how we got into farming because we apprenticed under them for a couple years. And so Cookie Glover of course had been farming there. Other than that in this area, no, I didn't know of any other women farmers.

**00:14:33**

**SW:** Did people have a certain reaction to that or was it not, or did people just not think about it?

**00:14:39**

**JJ:** Yeah, I think still folks are surprised when they learn—. Well number one that both Chris and I are farming full-time and we are making it. But yeah, also that a young woman would choose to farm for a living.

**00:15:00**

**SW:** Did you and Chris live in the trailer on the Glover's property?

**00:15:04**

**JJ:** No, we actually just drove back and forth. We were caretaking a house just down the road before we moved onto this farm and Chris was substitute teaching and also working at night as a server so we were kind of piecing together an income in that way. I was doing some landscaping jobs on the side so it wasn't a full-time apprenticeship. It was more of us going up a few days a week and just gleaning whatever knowledge we could during that time.

**00:15:39**

**SW:** And do you know what year that was, do you remember?

**00:15:41**

**JJ:** That must have been 2006 'cause we started this farm 2007.

**00:15:48**

**SW:** And can you talk a little bit about starting the farm here how that worked and what it was like?

**00:15:55**

**JJ:** Yeah, so—so actually we started just on about a fourth of an acre, more like a big garden. We knew that we needed to irrigate the area, but we—we didn't want to go into debt. So we—we were working still with the Glovers and going up there part-time and we had our—our big garden here that we were selling from. And not having debt was such a big priority that we—we decided that I should go back to school for nursing because I had a few friends that were doing traveling nursing and they were able to make a good bit of money in a short amount of time by going to California or somewhere else where nurses were needed.

**00:16:49**

So you know although it wasn't a passion of mine I thought you know medicine or nursing could be really interesting and you know a worthwhile career at least for a few years. So I went back to school before we started the farm and got prerequisites done and got into a nursing program here at LaGrange College, but right before I started the program, Skip Glover called and told us that there was a grant available for irrigation through the National Resources Conservation Service. So we applied for that and got it and that was a ninety percent cost share, so it basically paid for our irrigation system. So I did not have to go back to school and become a nurse. So—so that summer which was the summer of 2007 we installed our irrigation and started growing on probably two acres.

**00:17:53**

**SW:** And you said you were selling from your garden before that happened? Were you just selling locally here?

00:17:59

**JJ:** Yeah, we were selling at local farmers' markets in LaGrange, Columbus, and Opelika.

00:18:08

**SW:** And what kinds of things were you selling? What kinds of things were you growing at the time?

00:18:12

**JJ:** Basically vegetables, well actually the first thing we planted was blueberries because we knew we wanted to have fruit and that is something that would take the longest to start producing so we bought 100 blueberry plants. We also bought some figs, persimmons, and pears, and blackberries. So we got those things in the ground first. But what we were selling from was our garden which was anything from eggplant, tomatoes, squash, turnips, just seasonal produce basically.

00:18:54

**SW:** And can you talk about—so you got the irrigation grant and you got that up and running. What were the first six months of—of having the farm after the irrigation? What was that like for you guys?

00:19:06

**JJ:** It was intense. I mean we had jumped right into it. We had met Joe [Reynolds] and Judith [Winfrey] through the Glovers and decided to form a partnership to provide a CSA for a Unitarian church in Atlanta that was looking for farmers to partner with. So although we had

started off in the very beginning marketing to farmers' markets, the CSA was our first real big market I guess.

**00:19:45**

So together we provided for it was about an eighty to 100-member CSA. So that was a lot of pressure right off. But it really helped having them to partner with because we could split up of course the pressure and what we were growing. So looking back I mean I am really surprised that we jumped in so quickly because we were also marketing to restaurants in Atlanta. But I'm not sure how we would have done it otherwise to prove to my parents that it could be successful so that they could continue to you know support the idea of what we were doing with their land and just to have the income to—to keep going and to—to build our income so that we didn't have to go into debt to purchase all the things that go into starting a farm.

**00:20:43**

**SW:** And I don't want to jump too far ahead, but I'm wondering, I mean you started with the CSA. What was the name of the church, do you remember the name?

**00:20:53**

**JJ:** I think it was Unitarian Universalists of Atlanta, possibly.

**00:20:59**

**SW:** And you guys were partnering with Joe and Judith to provide the CSA?

**00:21:03**

**JJ:** Right, yeah and I believe Joe is still selling to the—the folks at that church, so it's a really supportive community, yeah.

**00:21:11**

**SW:** I'm wondering if you could talk about sort of how you went from you know providing the CSA—helping to provide the CSA in Atlanta and supply to restaurants in Atlanta and if there was an immediate interest in this community here in Pine Mountain and the region when you started at that same time, or if that has shifted since you started the farm.

**00:21:33**

**JJ:** Well that first year yeah, we were really concentrated in Atlanta because that's where our connections were through the Glovers and with Joe and Judith. So we—we opened an on-farm stand here on Wednesdays. And it was a slow start but it was enough interest that kept building so that we decided we wanted to try a CSA down here.

**00:22:08**

So it must have been that second year of—of farming that we—we started about a thirty member CSA in LaGrange. A local newspaper had done an article about the farm and so a lot of people were calling us, asking about availability of produce. So we didn't have to advertise at all, it was just through that—that one newspaper article that we immediately got thirty members in LaGrange. So that was a good way to start to transition down to our own community—that and through the on-farm market. People were learning about us and word of mouth was spreading. Then we started going to the Columbus Farmers' Market and that market started out very small, even though Columbus is a pretty big city. But that's just grown more and more each year. So

the people down in Columbus, we have a huge waiting list down there now for our CSA. We've got sixty-five members right now but could easily have a lot more than that. We could—we could run our farm just delivering to Columbus but we have you know members that have been with us since the beginning in LaGrange and on-farm, so we like to have it spread out among the three locations.

**00:23:31**

**SW:** And I'm wondering Jenny if you could talk a little bit about why you think that is—because when I was talking to you off—before I started the tape it seems like a lot of the farms that—a lot of the women I spoke to who have farms outside Atlanta just talk about how the demand is the biggest from Atlanta because it's the city, there's a lot more people there, but it's difficult to get interest in their own communities and it seems like you guys have had—I mean great support from your own community here and that you—you don't even have to really go to Atlanta do you?

**00:24:02**

**JJ:** No, we don't—we don't go to Atlanta. Yeah, it's surprising to me when I hear folks say that they have to drive into a city because this is not a densely populated area, besides Columbus being to the south of us. But I don't know. I feel like everywhere people are becoming more aware and are looking for something like this. So it—it is surprising to me when—when people have to drive into the city and it's—you know unfortunate with the cost of fuel and just losing that connection with—with your community right around you. So we're—I don't—I don't know the answer, why—why this area really has taken to it other than there really aren't but maybe a

couple of other growers in this area, so the access is so limited that when folks found out about us they just really flocked to it, the people that were really looking for it and interested.

**00:25:08**

**SW:** And I asked you about this on the phone yesterday, you've done interviews with people in the area here. I'm just wondering if you know anything about the history—well what you know of the history of the land here and the community in terms of its relation to agriculture and farming.

**00:25:26**

**JJ:** Uh-hm, yeah, there still are quite a few people that keep cows. It's the cow/calf operation where people raise the cows and then they ship them off to feed lots in the Midwest. But there is quite—quite a bit of open pasture land and cows kept for that. Still several people producing hay, there's a lot of horses around here, but within a ten-mile radius I think one of the old-timers was telling me there used to be something like ten dairies just in this area. Of course all but maybe one of those are closed now and that one I'm pretty sure is struggling. But yeah, but besides the cows and the—the dairy farms and the hay I'm not aware of any vegetable production that has been done in this area in a long, long time.

**00:26:32**

**SW:** What was—I guess I wanted to ask you this before we started talking about the evolution of the farm, but what was the land—I mean was the soil ready for you guys—when you guys started was it some—a process that you had to you know work with the soil before you could start? Everyone talks about the red clay and getting that nice topsoil and it's difficult.

00:26:50

**JJ:** Yeah, our soil was definitely lacking in organic matter as most soil in Georgia or the Southeast is. But my dad had kept cows on the property and so the fields that we are growing on had at least been grazed, so that was helpful. And also our soil type is interesting. We don't have heavy clay where we're growing. It's a nice mixture of—of sand, it's kind of a sandy loam, it's not perfect, but it was something that we could work with right away you know with a lot of additions of compost and minerals and we're still applying those things trying to get our organic matter levels up but through cover cropping and composts and—and those amendments. It's—that's been one of the best things about farming is to see how quickly the soil has changed and how much more productive it is just in six years.

00:27:55

**SW:** And can you—you've mentioned this you know a couple times throughout the interview so far, but can you talk about what you guys grow here in terms of specific crops and if that's changed since you started, if you've experimented or if you started growing something that you didn't fare well but it actually has, if there is anything surprising?

00:28:19

**JJ:** Yeah, there's—I can't think of anything that we started out growing that we don't grow now. We basically just try to keep it as diverse as possible. We—we try to keep it a good mix of the traditional vegetables that people are you know very familiar with and love like tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, turnip greens—things like that but then we do grow things that people are unfamiliar with first of all because they grow really well here, things like Asian greens,

komatsuna, tatsoi, bok choy, and then also things that—that grow well here that we want to introduce people to like kohlrabi. We don't grow a ton of these things even though it's tempting since they grow so well here and so quickly. But we do feel like that's an important component to this type of farm when you've got a direct relationship with your buyers is that you want to introduce them to the—to the things that grow well here and that are so nutritionally dense.

**00:29:29**

**SW:** And I'm wondering, you said that you recently—the Berkshire pigs are they recent, they're recent?

**00:29:34**

**JJ:** Oh yeah. They're actually not Berkshire but they're a cross between Mule Foot and Red Waddle which are two Southern heritage breeds. And then we also have this year some Large Blacks which is a similar breed. So those yeah, they are recent, we started raising pigs just a few for ourselves a couple years ago and last year we had two that gave us a lot more meat than we needed for the year. So we sold some of it to our CSA members and people were so receptive we decided we wanted to increase the number of pigs we kept so we could sell more.

**00:30:18**

**SW:** And how many do you have now?

**00:30:19**

**JJ:** We have five now.

00:30:21

**SW:** And where did you get them from?

00:30:22

**JJ:** We got these from—we got them as piglets, weaned piglets from a grower in Athens. And then next year we plan to get them from our friend that is just up the road in La Grange. He has Large Blacks and so we plan on getting a few from him.

00:30:44

**SW:** Do you have any particular stories about working with the pigs that—that have—you want to share?

00:30:50

**JJ:** We—we like the pigs because I'm trying to think of how my husband worded it. They—they kind of provide some animation to a produce operation. You know they have so much personality and they're so smart, so they're easy to pasture. We just keep them out on two strands of poly-wire, electrified, and they're so smart that they don't challenge it. So they're easy to contain. They're pretty easy to move. And yeah, we just like having something live or you know—yeah an animal that has so much personality to kind of observe on the farm.

00:31:39

**SW:** Uh-hm, and Jenny I just have a couple more questions. Are you okay with time?

00:31:42

**JJ:** Uh-hm.

00:31:43

**SW:** I'm wondering, I mean you grew up here and you now farm this land. I'm wondering if you could talk about any particular stories about how you've seen the area change or if it's not really changed and it's held—held the same you know in terms of its connection to agriculture in terms of the community—just the land itself.

00:32:07

**JJ:** Uh-hm, yeah we're—we're lucky in that Harris County is at least this part of the county is very undeveloped. There is still a lot of open farmland. So it is nice to ride through the county and see that the same families that have owned big tracts of land are still holding onto that land. You know they may not be farming it organically or intensively like we do but it is—it is nice to see that people still value land and that we have kind of a buffer from the development of Columbus or La Grange because of that. I would love to see more small diversified farms because obviously there's such a demand for it. If we have—we have over 100 people that have signed up on our waiting list for a CSA and so it's you know a dream to see more younger people move into the area and—and start farming food again.

00:33:16

**SW:** When you have 100 people on the waiting list for a CSA does—I mean do you guys—how do you—how do you balance that with growth? I mean you know you—you learn about some of these farms where they had 100 acres and they had to farm on 100 acres and that kind of—it

doesn't necessarily work very well. Do you guys intend to grow because of the demand? I mean how does that work for you guys?

**00:33:39**

**JJ:** We've talked about it a lot but we're really comfortable at the production level we're at now. As we see our soil able to support more life we may be able to produce more food on the acreage we're growing on but we don't—we don't plan to expand the acreage. It's tempting because we have yeah, so many folks in this area that are hungry for this food so there's a feeling of obligation to provide it. But there's only so much we can do, we don't want to manage a lot of people. That's—that's just personal preference for us. We want to keep our—our crew, our farm crew small, so also it's—it's tempting to get bigger because we have more land to work with that we—we need to have a plan of how to steward it. So if we increase in any capacity it would probably be with animals to help manage the land.

**00:34:46**

**SW:** And speaking of crew, how many people work here on the farm with you and Chris?

**00:34:52**

**JJ:** So we've hired two full-time apprentices that come on February through November every year and then generally we have a couple of volunteers throughout the season, a few work shares that work on the farm a few hours a week in exchange for food, and we hire one part-time worker through the summer to help with the weed eating and the trellising and some of the more physically demanding things that the summer brings.

**00:35:23**

**SW:** And I think I read this somewhere, I don't know if you guys still do it but you were working—I think it was with Heifer International where you had a plot of land that people could come and you also had WWOOFers come in—is that right?

**00:35:34**

**JJ:** We haven't had WWOOFers yet. Yeah, we—we like the apprentice model you know for folks that are looking seriously at farming as a career and with our experience with WWOOFing what we found was it was more folks that were traveling and just looking for an opportunity to work in exchange for a place to stay and food.

**00:35:59**

**SW:** Are you seeing a lot of younger people come into apprentice?

**00:36:03**

**JJ:** Yeah, yeah definitely. There are—we've had a lot of folks apply throughout the years. And—and we've had some amazing workers come through. They don't always go on to continue farming but I think that they you know take away a valuable experience that shapes what they go on to do whether it's growing food or being involved in some other capacity of—of the food system.

**00:36:30**

**SW:** Are you seeing many women come through?

**00:36:34**

**JJ:** Yeah, we actually have two women this season and so that's exciting because they are possibly going to be managing a neighbor's farm locally so that's like our dream is to train up you know other young farmers that can help contribute to the food of this community.

**00:36:57**

**SW:** Are many of the people who come through to apprentice are they from the area or are they from all over?

**00:37:02**

**JJ:** They're usually from other states. This year they're from Alabama and Florida. We've had a couple of local folks. But usually we've had them come from as far as Arizona, New York, Connecticut, and then I think we've had probably three or four folks from Georgia throughout the years.

**00:37:28**

**SW:** And there was one thing I wanted to ask you about the farm gatherings that you guys do with the community here. Can you talk about what they are and—?

**00:37:36**

**JJ:** Yeah, the farm dinners, we do one or two a year and they started, the—the very first one was a fund-raiser for Slow Food. We were going as farmer delegates to the Terra Madre Conference [in Italy] and so we wanted to help contribute to the funds that were paying for the farmers to get over to Italy. So that was the first one. We had started selling food to a local

restaurant here, a café called The Rose Cottage and a chef there—the chef and owner Shannon Cline had become a friend and she was a CSA member and we asked her if she would want to be involved? And she was very enthusiastic about it, you know very inspired by cooking with—with produce from the farm. So that first dinner we had close to 200 people. And so we enjoyed it so much we—we decided to start doing it each year and I’m not sure what the future for that is because it’s so much work for really not—not much profit at all. Of course we—we want to keep it affordable so that our friends and our customers can afford to come, but at the same time it makes a lot of sense for these organizations like Outstanding in the Field to charge you know \$200 a plate because honestly that’s what you have to charge to make it profitable. There’s so much labor that goes into providing a meal on a farm so I don’t—I don’t know what direction we’ll take that.

**00:39:22**

This past spring we did ham and sausage from our hogs and I made 400 biscuits, which is one reason why I’m questioning how we’re going to do this in the future. I wanted to take some of the work off of Shannon, the chef that we partner with because she works so hard. She does everything herself—homemade, you know working with fresh produce is more labor intensive than—than something that’s more processed. So I wanted to take a little bit of the work off her and I had just recently inherited my grandfather’s biscuit bowl, his wooden biscuit bowl and we had so much lard from these hogs that we had just processed because heritage breeds generally have more lard. The—the more modern breeds are bred leaner.

**00:40:20**

So I didn’t realize it but these particular—this particular breed we had, the Mule Foot is known for their lard. So we ended up with probably fifty pounds of rendered lard and—and so I wanted to use that in the biscuits. I mean I thought, “What better way to use up some of that fat.”

So I value that experience because I—I feel like I kind of perfected my biscuit making in that—those few weeks that I was making and freezing the biscuits, but at the same time it was very difficult to farm all day and then go in and make biscuits at night. **[Laughs]** So we'll see what happens with that, it's just kind of difficult to know how do you host something like that for the community and keep it affordable and keep the quality where we want it, but um, but not kill yourself in the process of doing it.

**00:41:22**

**SW:** Can you tell me your grandfather's name and maybe a little bit about his biscuit bowl that you inherited?

**00:41:27**

**JJ:** Oh yeah, his name was Bill Earl. He passed away about two years ago. And he made biscuits every Saturday morning for all of his kids in recent years. So my dad and his four siblings would go over at eight o'clock on Saturday morning and my grandfather would have this feast of a breakfast ready and biscuits of course were served at every breakfast. I'm sure he cooked them through the week too but Saturday morning is when he shared them with all of his children.

**00:42:04**

And so the biscuit bowl and the container which is like a little aluminum container that they were kept in to keep them warm, when things were being divided up among my grandfather's estate that was probably the most highly sought after item and so my dad and his siblings drew straws for it and he got it. So I am very, very lucky to have inherited that.

00:42:31

**SW:** Do you have a special spot where you keep it?

00:42:34

**JJ:** I just keep it in the kitchen on my counter. It's kind of—so it's always in-sight and accessible so—so it's inspired me to make a lot more biscuits than I would have otherwise. And yeah, I love feeling a connection to him just knowing how many times his hands have been in that bowl.

00:42:56

**SW:** Jenny, I don't really have—the only other question I have for you is sort of just a—you know how you guys—how you feel that this farm has impacted the—the culture of—of the agriculture scene—I don't want to say agriculture, just farming here in the region, how—what kind of impact, what your mark has been on that.

00:43:19

**JJ:** Yeah, hopefully it's an inspiration for—for other people to do the same thing in this area, because like I've said there really aren't any other growers in this area. So you know when people come in and see how well received we've been I hope that it's just inspiration for other young farmers. The limitation there is access to land. And of course we are really blessed that my parents have been so generous with this land. But yeah, I—I mean we're overwhelmed by how—how we've been received and the gratitude from our customers. I mean I just feel like we have the best customers in the world. I—I love that I can think about who our food is going to when we're—when we're harvesting, when we're packaging, if we're having a hard time with

something I can literally think about the faces that you know this food is feeding and it's just—it's so gratifying because people appreciate having the access to it so much. It's like they've heard about it for a while you know through reading about stuff going on in Atlanta or even out West and so people here are just so hungry for it and it really makes it possible for us to farm for a living.

**00:44:57**

**SW:** Do you think—well actually I wanted to ask you this first, do you have any stories to tell about your customers or things that they've said to you or just the—about the relationship between the community and the farm?

**00:45:10**

**JJ:** Yeah, let's see. I have some customers in La Grange that have been with since that first CSA we started here locally and their daughter must have been just a few months old when they joined and now Ada is five. And so Ada's parents tell me about the foods that they've been introducing to her since they joined the CSA and how much she loves them. And so yeah to see a little girl grow up on the food that we're producing and that she gets excited about it and coming to the CSA is one of her favorite things to do throughout the week—Andy, her dad told me a story one time about going—this is when she was three years old, going to the grocery store and as she walked by the broccoli she proclaimed, “This broccoli is not nearly as good as Miss Jenny's broccoli.” And to hear that coming from a three year-old that's probably you know one of the biggest compliments I've ever gotten as a farmer.

00:46:27

Yeah, so to see the families value it and—and—and for their kids to be exposed to good food that's very gratifying.

00:46:38

**SW:** Are there any other stories you want to share about the farm that I didn't ask you about? I mean I was covering just a lot of the—the history but I mean I'm wondering if there's anything else that you want to share that you think is important in terms of stories surrounding the farm or your work here?

00:46:54

**JJ:** Hmm, yeah. Um, well last year we had probably—definitely our toughest season so far. I feel like we've been extremely lucky in that way in that we haven't had a lot of crop loss since we've started farming but last fall we had tremendous pest pressure, which we always have more pests in the fall because we're planting our fall crops at the end of summer when the pest population is at their highest, the temperatures are at their highest, it's generally the driest for us. So it's like the conditions are just right, but last year we lost so many things—things that we've never had problems like Swiss chard and so there were—even though our CSA members, they got the value of what they paid for, we would purchase food from other local farms. We went up to North Georgia and got apples. So it—it wasn't that they didn't get what they paid for but when we—we write a weekly newsletter, my husband does to keep people connected to the farm of what's going on, and so as we were sharing you know the struggles of the season, people are so supportive. You know they were willing to not get food so that we wouldn't have to go on and—and purchase food.

**00:48:32**

And just the response from that hard season from our customers I just felt like, I felt so supported that if anything ever went wrong again if we had you know total crop loss or god-forbid like a tornado or something like that—that could just take out the farm, I really feel like our community, our members would keep us going, which is a really good feeling as a farmer because so many things hinge on the weather especially as the climate is changing. It's kind of scary. So that—even though it was such a hard season, the—the love and the support we felt directly from our—our customers is something that can carry us through other tough seasons.

**00:49:24**

**SW:** Is there anything else you want to add Jenny before—?

**00:49:26**

**JJ:** I don't think so.

**00:49:28**

**SW:** Okay, thank you for doing this—this morning. I appreciate it.

**00:49:31**

**JJ:** Oh thank you, I'm honored.

**00:49:36**

**[End Jenny Jackson Interview]**