



Farm News - January

"Food for the brain". Gifts come in many forms and one that I have grown to really appreciate is one my daughter made. Not knitting or art but something much more practical - lard! More specifically, lard made from our own pigs. Organic lard made from our pastured Berkshire pigs. Was it tough to do? Not at all. What she did was with a knife, cut up some back fat into small pieces, put it into a slow cooker with a bit of water and in the morning strain the liquid into a jar. That was all. The jar just sits by the stove with a fork in it. Anytime we need some fat for frying, that's what we use. No more chemically processed vegetable oils or concerns about frying up genetically modified oils or guilt about having to import oil from across the ocean. Now our supply of fat comes right from our farm and along with it, the feeling of being a bit more independent.

But can it be good for you? My father who came from eastern Europe used to call lard "food for the brain". It didn't really impress me as I was growing up but now there seems to be new research suggesting that fat from pigs fed a natural diet has all kinds of beneficial qualities. Traditional wisdom? My subscription to "Wise Traditions" (Volume 13, No.3) certainly supports the idea.

Regardless of what others say, it feels right so I'm a new convert. Makes good pastries too!

"Back in the good old days" some things were not quite as easy as they are now. Mixing feed was one of them. Our mix mill. With the aid of our old tractor, would grind and blend a variety of grains into turkey, chicken or pig food. Filling up the mix mill was the chore. My 10 year old son would ask "how many pails?" "A hundred and twenty!". Then the two of us would start filling up the pails, carry them out of the granary, lift them to the mix mill and pour them in slowly so the machine wouldn't plug. A pail of wheat weighed 35 pounds. They built kids tough in those days. Just this month we finished wiring our electric augers. Now a twist of the timer sends the grain to mix mill. Sweet!

Genetic manipulation - farm style. Buttercup, our Jersey milk cow has faithfully been giving us a gallon of milk every morning since she had her calf last March. Eventually she will slow down her milk production until her next calf is born. When Buttercup came to our farm early last year, she was already bred to a Jersey bull. The result was a Jersey calf (Daisy), a brown shaded, big eyed, boney looking calf of the dairy breed. But Daisy was a result of a Jersey X Jersey. We don't have a Jersey bull. Our bull (Lance) is a belted Galloway, rather plump, black at both ends with a white belt around the middle. Jersey X Belted Galloway? I have no idea what the calf would look like but I'm sure Buttercup will not mind and keep both the calf and our family supplied with milk. Jerry