



Roving Donkey Farm, Bismarck, ND

Since 2012, the Martin family have worked to convert ¼ acre of their tidy 2 acre lot into a super intensive high value mini-farm operation. The operation serves as Lori's primary source of income, her husband Kevin, works off the farm, but helps her with construction type projects as needed. Located just north of Bismarck in a rural subdivision, Lori produces vegetables and herbs for sale through farmers market, restaurants, a CSA, and direct sales off the farm. She also adds value to her product mix with her own homemade jam and salsa line.

To aid in her production, she has a 17X30' greenhouse, that she starts her own plants in, and a 36'X72' high tunnel. With her farm and marketing strategy, she finds it most convenient to use the tunnel to grow higher quality warm season crops, rather than season extended cool crops. However, she does put cucumbers into the tunnel earlier in May than she would dare put them outside, utilizing a frost blanket for protection. She admits that sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. She also has proven that you can keep spinach in the high tunnel all winter long (it will freeze, but it starts to grow again each time the weather gets above freezing again). She does not market the spinach at this time.

Along with vegetables, Lori also has a small orchard, berries, and some perennial crops. It is Lori's vision to increase her value by expanding her value-added product line and sales.



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Analysis

Lori has a unique situation in that she is located so close to a larger urban area. This opens up her market opportunities and fairly offsets her current scale-up limitation. A professional chef by trade, she is also able to capitalize on previous management experience in the food service industry.

Careful attention to production and recordkeeping details, helps Lori to manage intensely and remain profitable. She grows tomatoes, peppers, and cucumbers in her tunnel, utilizing vertical supports as needed to maximize her space. Lori's farm is not certified organic, however, being committed to organic production practices, she finds it helpful to follow Eliot Coleman production recommendations and philosophies.

In the future, Lori sees herself moving away from farmers' market sales in exchange for more restaurants, gift shops, or CSA sales. Being a self-starter and innovator, she serves on two non-profit Board of Directors, offers tours of her farm, and occasionally accepts public speaking arrangements. She certainly has a story to share, as she brings in gross sales of nearly \$20,000 off of her ¼ acre farm.

Advice

Lori's advice to new farmers is:

"Educate yourself before you start; read a lot and volunteer or work on other farms. Also, don't be afraid to experiment and don't put yourself in a box; be willing to change, as needed to meet your farming goals."



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2016 Data

Revenue			
Total Sales by Month			
April	\$	959.50	
May	\$	1,644.00	
June	\$	2,086.24	
July	\$	1,746.80	
August	\$	1,791.50	
September	\$	356.35	
October	\$	2,103.50	
November	\$	76.50	
December	\$	2,462.25	
Total 2016 Sales		\$	13,226.64
Expenses			
Total Expenses		\$	8,924.72
Marketing Channel			
Farmers Market		25%	
Restaurant		23%	
CSA		33%	
Egg Sales		6%	
Direct Sales		7%	
Other		7%	
Plant and Harvest Schedule			
Outdoor Planting Began	1	May	<i>Carrots, Beets, Lettuce, Radishes</i>
High Tunnel Planting Began	1	May	<i>Cucumbers</i>
Outdoor Harvest Began	12	June	<i>Kale, Lettuce, Radishes</i>
High Tunnel Harvest Began	12	June	<i>Cucumbers, Tomatoes</i>
Outdoor Harvest Ended	9	Oct	<i>Beets, Kale, Lettuce</i>
High Tunnel Harvest Ended	2	Oct	<i>Cucumbers</i>
Outdoor Harvest Period Lasted	18	Weeks	
High Tunnel Harvest Period Lasted	17	Weeks	

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