Welcome to Blue Skies Farm!



After 35 years of city life, Peter and Stacy Raith decided to start their next chapter by returning to northeast Missouri, specifically Hannibal, to fulfill a lifelong dream.

For years, Peter's father, grandfather and family ran Raith Brothers Produce, a produce distributor of local farmers housed on the St. Louis Produce Row. These roots took hold in Peter as he became a produce buyer for several large grocery companies and owned two independent grocery stores. Even through other career paths, his passion for growing produce never left his sight.

Stacy grew up in Hannibal, with extended family in Palmyra and northeast Missouri. Some were farmers, some lived in the towns, but as was typical in small communities, friends and family gathered around food. One grandmother ran the kitchen at the local truck stop restaurant and another grandmother moved to very-rural Montana to also run a kitchen and restaurant at a truck stop. (We all know the best food is where the truckers eat!) Additionally, large holiday family gatherings allowed everyone to share their specialties, from mashed potatoes and oyster dressing to broccoli casserole and cheesecake. In small communities, welcome wagons, coffee clubs, women's auxiliary and Friday night family gatherings were a means of community engagement—all of which required food. Stacy's love of food and entertaining grew into a 35-year career in the food and beverage industry, planning fun-themed parties for family and friends and feeding many groups along the way.

Peter always wanted to grow vegetables and bake bread. Stacy wanted to become more engaged with Culver-Stockton and agreed to move "home," and the Raiths returned to Hannibal in 2019.

Their first purchase was 13 acres and a small homestead just a few minutes south of Hannibal. Then the work began: building a workshop and equipment shed, then a high tunnel hoop house, a greenhouse, and a pond. They renovated the entire bungalow farmhouse from top to bottom and transformed the house's one car garage into a bakery.



With the buildings in place, planting began. Peter was extremely knowledgeable about produce, but he was born, raised, and lived in large cities his entire life, and he had never grown one plant. Through the help of area farmers, Missouri Extension staff, and lots of research, over 200 tomato, cucumber, and pepper plants were planted in the hoop house. Through the years, planting has included tubs, coco coir, raised beds, and transformed chicken coop foundations.

Baking bread was the next challenge. Neither Peter nor Stacy had baked bread and only remembered the ease in which their grandmothers produced beautiful loaves. Through diligence, trial and error, and maybe a few extra pounds from tasting, Peter mastered focaccia loaves. Peter's bread immediately became a hit at the local Farmer's Market and later as a provision in a local meat shop.



As tomatoes became abundant, it quickly became apparent that while there were multiple vendors with beautiful tomatoes and produce at the Farmer's Market, no one was producing ready-made products. As a licensed commercial kitchen and in coordination with the local health department, Blue Skies Farm started producing ready-to-eat products, including basil pesto, kale pesto, garden marinara sauce, salsa, pico de gallo, tomato juice and more. The partnership of Peter's growing and Stacy's cooking created offerings for both the local Farmer's Market and ingredients for the upcoming farm-to-table restaurant.

The restaurant was a lifelong dream of Peter's and a nemesis of Stacy's. Having been in the food and beverage industry, another night of customers and late nights doing dishes were not in Stacy's next chapter plans. But after 40 years of marriage, Peter's charm won out. However, the compromise was one weekend per month. Hannibal and the immediate area have some wonderful independent restaurants, so the Raiths had to find a niche or offering that didn't exist and create something one of a kind with their own talents.



This began "Welcome to Blue Skies Farm," an evening of food, fun, and friends. The menu is "blind," as guests do not know the theme or menu prior to arriving. Each month consists of six to eight courses of small plates built around a central theme, guest interaction, and lots of conversation. Guest chefs participate several times a year, creating meals that expand the guests' palates by providing unique and international flavors while incorporating ingredients from Blue Skies Farm and local farmers and vendors. When guest chefs are not available, Stacy creates and cooks themed events and menus inspired by the availability of local ingredients. From Ocktoberfest and Farma Mia to Galoween and the annual fundraiser for Hannibal High School Vocal Department, this type of dining experience is unique to the area and very special in a rural environment.

Blue Skies Farm embodies much of what makes the Midwestern culinary tradition so special: a farm-to-table connection with the land, reflected in their seasonal ingredients and dishes; a commitment to welcoming guests with kindness and hospitality; and most importantly, the laughter, love, and conversation shared around the table.



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