

MySustainableAdventures

Adventures implementing sustainability initiatives



My Favorite Farmer

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If you've ever gotten into a conversation with me, I'm pretty sure I've mentioned my favorite farmer at some point and time. Will Harris from [White Oak Pastures](#). He's not only my favorite farmer. He's one of my favorite people, a mentor and friend. I grew up about 30 miles from Will but our paths never crossed until I was working at [Emory Dining at Emory University](#). It was my job to search out as much local and sustainable foods that I could find, buy the food and educate the Emory community about the importance of those foods. That's how we officially met. Will is a great teacher filled with passion for what he does and I want to absorb everything he knows so we have great conversations. I think the mutual love of wine and a good time doesn't hurt either!



The Jeep is Will's favorite way to tour the farm when it isn't too hot. He's usually joined by Possum the Three-Legged-Wonder-Dog...at least when Possum isn't on a walk about (looking for the ladies). Yep, he's a lover folks. He will slap a kiss on your face quicker than you would expect.



When I think of sustainable agriculture, I think of Will. I don't know anyone else that's doing it better. Seriously. If Will hears of an idea to make his farm more sustainable, his animals happier/healthier or any innovation that would better utilize the available resources in a sustainable manner he doesn't say we can't do that. He says sign me up and let's figure it out for everyone.



Awards, certifications, media... They will run out of wall space soon.

The animals at White Oak Pastures - cows, turkeys, chickens, duck, geese, sheep, goats, rabbits and anything else that will work in his [Serengeti Plains Grazing Model](#) - are born on the farm and never leave the farm. That's right. There is an on-site [beef abattoir](#) and a recently built poultry abattoir right there on the farm. The only on site farm in the U.S. to have both USDA inspected facilities. Check out those food miles folks! Oh yea, did I mention they were designed by internationally recognized animal welfare expert [Dr. Temple Grandin](#)?





I watched Manny the head butcher from Buckhead Beef in Atlanta break down the entire side of beef by hand in less than 10 minutes. I love this picture.

I could go on forever but no one can tell the story like Will himself. I am mesmerized by his "Old South" Southern drawl and could listen to him for hours. Watch this great short film [CUD](#) by [Joe York](#) to learn more about Will and White Oak Pastures. Joe has done other short films about agriculture that are worth the view as well.

So Columbus, OH folks. Why am I telling you this? Because Will's daughter Jenni (another equally outstanding person just like her dad) visited last weekend!

She provided tastings of White Oak Pastures chicken at the [Whole Foods in Dublin](#) last Saturday. Whole Foods is a strong supporter of White Oak Pastures and Will and Jenni have played a huge role in their [5 Step Animal Welfare Rating System](#).

Buy some of the best chicken and grass-fed beef you've ever had (and I believe the most sustainable) at the Whole Foods in Dublin or Arlington when you get a chance.

For folks not in OH, you can find White Oak Pastures beef and chicken at Whole Foods locations from Miami, FL to Princeton, NJ so check your meat counter.





Tools of the trade...hook and a knife. Watching Manny with his tools was pure artistry.



It's not just all about the animals. They also look at their facility operations including rain barrels, solar panels, anaerobic digestion, zero waste operation, composting and a new organic vegetable CSA.



When I visit White Oak Pastures, I immediately get a sense of excitement to hang out with Will, Jenni and family on the farm because I know I will learn something new. Things that seemed so important no longer are and you realize what really means something. The worries in my life slip away as I am immersed back to my south Georgia roots as we ride through dirt roads just looking at nature....country time just moves slower. This is my happy place.

If you only click one link in this post, check out [CUD](#). It won't disappoint! Follow White Oak Pastures on [Facebook](#) and [twitter](#).

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