

BUSINESS PROFILE

I&G FARMS

If You Plant It They Will Come...

By Donna
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Love, dedication, blood, sweat and tears. Irene and Gregory Johnston's secret for not only what may be the best, tastiest corn on the cob you'll ever consume (take my word for it) but also one reason for the years of success that I&G Farms has experienced.

Located at 150 Whitesville Road, Jackson, I&G Farms is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. In fact, the only time they're closed is for two weeks at the beginning of November to transition into the holiday season and from January until the third week in March when they re-open for another selling season. The family run establishment has been delighting Jackson residents, in addition to residents of numerous other towns and even neighboring states, for over 35 years. Here you'll find fresher than fresh Jersey produce (a lot I&G grown) that will entice your pallet, lush hearty vegetation that will beautify your surroundings and seasonal creations to usher in the holiday season.

Don't visit I&G Farms expecting just a farm stand with a limited amount of produce. When you enter the "Family Farm Market," that not only has eye catching seasonal themed painted windows, but also an attractive, welcoming landscape of thriving flowers and plants that are available for purchase, you'll be impressed! The huge array of fruits and vegetables are a feast for your eyes, exploding with vivid color and bursting with just picked freshness. It's "Jersey Fresh" at its freshest, tastiest and finest!

"People have a lot higher awareness of the food that they're eating," Irene acknowledges. "A lot of them ask me about GMO (genetically modified organism.) I knew about

GMO for 20 years but if I mentioned it 20 years ago, they would have no clue what I'm talking about."

Health problems and environmental damage can occur from GMOs. According to the Non GMO Project, GMOs are "living organisms whose genetic material has been artificially manipulated in a laboratory through genetic engineering or GE. This creates unstable combinations of plant, animal, bacteria and viral genes that do not occur in nature or through traditional crossbreeding methods."

"People know they can come here, where the food was grown. I can give them the source of the seed and I know exactly how it was grown. That matters a lot," Irene adds. "People tell me our string beans taste like a bean. They've been eating food that has no taste because big corporate farms don't plow their ground. They just keep planting on it over and over again. There's nothing left in the soil, no nutrients. They have a machine that pulls the plant out of the ground and shakes it to death so beans fall off, go into a hopper, into a bin, get broken and get brown. They're beat up. Ours are hand-picked and beautiful."

In addition, varieties of squash, eggplant, "Jersey tomatoes" and Irene reveals, "the star of the show," Gregory's corn, which is always kept on ice, is grown on I&G's neighboring acreage. The corn is grown in various "blocks," and staggering the planting time results in corn (hopefully) until the end of October. The corn is white and bi-color (cross between white and yellow) and is picked daily, as needed, all day long.

"We always have fresh corn, all super sweet," Irene exclaims. "In my dreams, if someone told me people would go crazy over corn, I would never have believed it.

And my husband... it's like he's married to the corn and I'm the second wife," she says laughing. "It's the truth. He gets up at 5:30 a.m. and he's out in the cornfield."

It may seem strange imaging that corn has a following, but I&G's is legendary and is proof that people will travel to get a great ear of corn. Or... maybe put in a special request? Frequent I&G customer Liz Ferullo of Jackson, happily obliges.

"My aunt and uncle bring it back to Yonkers and my brother and sister-in-law from Toms River say "come over for a barbecue and bring the corn. Make sure that you stop by I&G," Ferullo says with a smile. "This is the sweetest corn anywhere in New Jersey."

The farms quality control is impeccable, with Gregory inspecting everything and making sure that it meets his and his family's high standards.

"My husband's passion is his farm," Irene proclaims.

It's obvious that Irene shares the same passion and not only enjoys the lasting customer friendships that have endured through the years, but the new ones that she continuously cultivates.

"A lot of customers are connoisseur growers," she notes. "That's why they come here. They get information, the knowledge and education they can't get anywhere else."

The corn and produce are not the only things that entice Ferullo and others to return to I&G Farms again and again. There's always



The Family Farm Market is open. There's no better time than now to stop at I&G Farms and get your fresh produce.

something new and different.

"I come often for my gardening, my plants, my perennials, my potted plants," Ferullo relates. "Everything has always done well year to year. The quality is phenomenal."

Like it says on their T shirts, I&G Farms are "growers for all seasons." Poinsettias are started in the greenhouses in July. Fall ushers in 20,000 field grown mums along with pumpkin's, cornstalks and straw. When produce ceases at the end of October, the market closes for two weeks and is transformed into a decorating center where wreaths, grave blankets and bows are custom made. And don't forget about the Christmas trees that follow.

Although time changes many things, customers are thrilled that I&G Farms remains a familiar area landmark. Through the years as construction of homes and businesses have increased in Jackson,

rumors have circulated in regard to the family selling their land to developers. Not to worry! Thanks to the Johnston's, their land and their neighbor's 30 acres is protected under the Farmland Preservation Program. Almost 70 acres on Whitesville Road can never be developed and I&G Farms will be around for a long time!

Visit I&G Farms at www.iandgfarms.com, and like them on Facebook; IG FARMS, but you must stop by! Questions? Call: 732-364-0308.

Irene looks back on her time on the farm as a "rewarding, wonderful experience" and looks ahead to more of the same. Retirement doesn't appear to be an option.

"My husband and I are too high spirited energy to walk away from something like this," she says amidst the hustle and bustle of the market. "It's in your soul. It's part of us. It's us. I&G. Irene and Greg. That's what it is."



Take your pick! The fruit is plentiful and delicious at I&G FARMS.



Meet the "star of the show" I&G's delicious corn. One bite and you'll be coming back for more.



The only thing better than a "Jersey tomato" is a "Jersey tomato" from I&G. Get them while you can.