

Spotlight on Golden Jubilee Farms

Successful farms are often times diverse with many products leading to that success.

For Dr. Mark Keisler of Gilbert, S.C., variety has been the hallmark of this farm's success. And his Golden Jubilee Farm is a wide mix of products and interests.

"We try to be diversified as much as we can," Keisler said. "You can't make a living at one thing."

Keisler's family has been farming the same land in Lexington County since the 1700s. The land was a grant from King George of England to the family of German decent. Over the years the land has been sold off and Keisler has bought it back piece by piece. He says he's an ophthalmologist by training, but his second love is farming.



Mark Keisler
Golden Jubilee Farms, Gilbert, S.C.

"My patients love this," Keisler said of his farm and mill. "It's not the usual thing a doctor does for fun."

The land was used as a hog farm for years until Keisler bought it back. Now it is home to a wide variety of products including long-leaf pine trees provide pine straw to landscapers.

"I love the forest and I love long-leaf pine," Keisler said.

He and his brother still run the nursery that has been in the family for 50 years. Keisler said working at the nursery put him through medical school. However, Golden Jubilee is most recognized as an artisan miller with heirloom corn grown by local farmers from Lexington County. Currently he sells his milled product directly to consumers in 15 country stores and online.

"We've had really good growth," he said. "I am looking at all avenues to get locally grown, locally ground across the state and nation."



Keisler said the Certified SC Grown logo has done more for his product than anything else. It's proudly displayed on his product bags and the side of the building that houses the mill.

His main heirloom corn products are grits, polenta and corn meal all ground on his mill. Last year he tested ten new heirloom products and settled on four. He is very excited about Floriani Red Flint. This variety of corn was taken from America back to Europe by Columbus and grown in Northern Italy. It makes an excellent

polenta and Keisler said he likes the rich flavor and thinks California will be a good market for this polenta.

“This is not fast cooking,” Keisler said of his milled products. “This is for people who want to slow down and enjoy the flavors.”

Because he operates his mill on an “as needed” basis, he only produces what he intends to sell to keep the freshest product available to his customers. He never stores what he mills. Typically he can mill 300 pounds per hour.

His latest venture is a “totally green” water-based milling operation on the expansive pond behind his home. Still under construction, the entire structure is a marvel built with recycled materials including a 2,000 pound running stone he acquired from a mill in Aiken that went out of business in the 1930s. The wood used to construct the building is swamp juniper from Black Creek Swamp and Congaree Creek.

“We’re going to bring something new to the market,” Keisler said of the water-powered grist mill. The new mill should be completed for the summer.

Aside from straw, mill and nursery; the farm provides everything from chicken eggs for his family and a host of other foods including blueberries and peaches. He recently began raising cattle to process and sells the meat. The cattle are all grass fed with some corn.

“We are a working farm,” Keisler said. “Everything we eat is all natural.”

For more information about how to order stone ground corn products, check out <http://www.goldenjubileefarms.com>. An updated website will be launched soon.

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