

POLISH HERITAGE FARM

*Inspired
by their
homeland!*



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&

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- INSPIRED BY THEIR FATHERS HOMELAND -

*I*t takes very strong willed personalities to follow their dreams. Kathleen and Thomas Koch are exactly that. Incredible what they have accomplished on their 40+ acres, bought only 3 years ago, after looking for available farms on “Craigslist”.... Quite a story!

Neither Kathleen nor Thomas had any formal training concerning livestock (other than owning a cat, as pointed out by Thomas) and very much come from an urban environment. The city of Hamtramck, much a creation by polish immigrants, was home for the two of them, and outside Thom’s involvement in community gardens, they had no personal connection to agriculture.





With their growing family in need of affordable, organically produced meat which is extremely limited in their region, it got them talking about producing their own. But when Kathleen approached Thomas about actually buying a farm, he treated it more like a joke, responding jestfully “you find it and I will buy it”.

So Kathleen started her search, and that is how Craigslist came into play. There actually are farms listed on that site, and Kathleen quickly found one that looked perfect to them. That is how their adventure in Leelanau County started, and even though they did not get the original property, they were well on their way.



They reviewed listing after listing of available properties, more than 50 in total, until they decided to look at one in particular – now their home and farm. Coming over a hill towards Lake Leelanau, the two of them must have had the same feeling Barbara and I had last summer when we visited them – what a beautiful site. Situated only a few hundred yards above the lake front cottages along the lake, you have an incredible view over the lake from the farm house – and the property even has lake access with a deeded lot.



*I*t is located a little more than 4 miles from the village of Cedar, where Kathleen has opened a Polish Art Center, modelled on her parent's store in Hamtramck. A perfect location for such a store, because "Polish" is in Cedar, home of a huge polish festival every summer. An old neglected dairy farm, with a barn and granary built around the turn of the 19th century, now lovingly updated and repurposed, many of the walls painted in traditional polish farm motives by Kathleen, is coming back to life.



The plan of having chickens and a substantial vegetable garden quickly changed with the addition of a few pigs, and after raising seven Duroc/Berkshire crosses the first year, they both knew that pigs were going to be part of the operation for good.



As luck has it, roughly the same time as their move to the farm, *Girls Meat Camp* was held in Northport that year, and the Koch's were the designated hosts. Coming away from the meeting not only with great new relationships and connections, they also for the first time learned about the Mangalitsa pig at the meeting. It was only shortly after the meeting that one of their new friends, Cayce Kelly, decided to end her farming life, retire to North Carolina, and gift part of her breeding stock to the Koch family.



Very lucky Mangalitsas I must say, since all animals at Polish Heritage Farm are treated with utmost compassion, in a species appropriate environment, including pastures with view of the lake. Just kidding of course on the lake view for the pigs, but they are on pasture, and their supplemental feed is based on a corn free – soy free ration, what is of course the absolute perfect diet for Mangalitsas. The plan is to also add Mangalitsa crosses, making them available to many of the restaurants catering to the northern Michigan tourist trade.





Already delivering produce from their organic garden plot to several chefs in Traverse City, the center of the agro tourism industry in northern Michigan, adding quality pork will certainly only open doors to more customers. Northern Michigan is becoming one of the true foody capitals of the USA, and many of these foodies want their children to experience real farm life.

Kathleen and Thomas are offering a unique setting and opportunity for them to teach their own children about food production and animal husbandry, while at the same time earning additional income from offering that experience.

Their plan is to make **Polish Heritage Farm** into a model for others with similar dreams to follow, enjoying the immense pleasure of living and working in a more traditional way, but at the same time enjoying the benefits our modern society can provide.



Polish Heritage Farm

- THOMAS & KATHLEEN KOCH -



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Royal Mangalitsa

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