

Getting to Know Farmer Emma of **YELLOW HOUSE FARM**



Let's explore our first food career, farming! There are a lot of different ways you can farm and a lot of different types of food you can produce on your farm. Today we interview with Farmer Emma of Yellow House Farm, a small organic farm in Baltimore City.

Emma is a part of the Farm Alliance, "an organization of urban farms and neighborhood growers", and started her farm in 2016. We asked her some questions about her career in farming:



Q: When did you first start farming?

A: In high school, I had an internship at Great Kids Farm (just outside the city on the west side!) at the end of my senior year, and I kept working there into the summer.

Q: Did you grow up on a farm, if not, how did you learn?

A: Nope! However, I don't consider myself a "first generation farmer"--my mom grew up on a farm where her father raised beef cattle and green beans (for a cannery). I use a very different approach than my grandfather, though--we get into arguments about farming sometimes. I learned a lot from books and from direct experience on organic farms and just trying things out! I am still learning a lot.

Q: Is it hard work?

A: Farming is hard work--mentally and physically. The physical part is obvious: you do a lot of repetitive motions, you have to lift a lot of weight throughout the day, and you work long hours in all kinds of weather. Mentally--it's stressful because so many things can go wrong, from pests eating your crops to all sorts of problems with the weather (early frost, late frost, too much rain, not enough rain, too much wind, etc.) to situations like we're experiencing now where the business side of things is really uncertain.



QQ: Where is your farm? How did you pick your location?

A: Yellow House Farm is in Cedmont, a neighborhood in the northeast corner of Baltimore City. I wanted to buy land with a house on it so that I didn't have to "commute" to the farm, and so that I could make investments in perennials (mostly fruits!).

: How big is your farm?

A: The primary site is 1/3 of an acre (about 1/4 of a football field!*).

Q: Do you go to the grocery store?

A: Yes! Definitely! We have three hens who provide enough eggs for us most of the year (they take a break in the winter), and I've raised some rabbits for meat. I try to buy milk, meat, and fruits from the farmer's market. There are also a few things that I have started growing but which haven't really produced yet--asparagus takes THREE years to grow before you can harvest it, so if I want asparagus, I still have to buy it this year, even though I have a lot planted. And I get coffee, chocolate, flour, and other staples from the grocery store.

Q: What's your favorite thing that you grow?

A: That is a really hard question! I love having fresh rosemary at home, and it's also hard to beat a fresh tomato. Parsley is actually one of my favorites though. It's pretty easy to grow and it tastes really good with a lot of different cuisines.

Q: What's your favorite meal you make from what you grow?

A: I like to make quiches a lot from the hens' eggs, whatever greens we have on hand, and mushrooms from the farmers market.

Q: Do you have a favorite month on the farm?

A: Maybe September or October, when it's still warm and there is a lot that can be planted, but it's not as crazy as spring. Fall is always bittersweet though--I don't love winters!

Q: When does your work day start? When does your work day end?

A: It depends! If I'm working at a farmers market, I wake up around 4:30 AM and leave the house by 5:30. I'll get home from the market around 1:30 PM, and then I typically have a bunch of things to take care of--feeding the animals, watering the greenhouse, etc. On more normal weekdays, I wake up between 6:30-7. I often start out with office work in the cooler months as the day warms up, but in the summer I'll start outside as early as possible and then do office work while eating lunch. I'll have a long lunch break (an hour or two) but I'm usually either answering emails, talking to people on the phone, or organizing something while I eat and relax. Then I'll get back to work and go until at least 5 or 6, though often 7 or 8pm. I'll make dinner and eat, then either do some office work or finish something up outside while wearing a headlamp.

Q: Do you have people to help you on the farm or when you are selling your produce?

A: Right now, I don't really have help on the farm, but when I'm selling produce at the farmers market I always work with someone else.

Q: What kind of living creatures do you encounter on the farm? (Bugs/animals)

A: SO MANY. My #1 enemy is the family of groundhogs that live here and eat everything. There are also a couple foxes that live in the neighborhood and I'll see them late at night or early in the morning--they're not very afraid so sometimes we are very close. Occasionally I'll see mice, but the cat helps take care of them. We also have many, many insects--too many to name. This year I'm expecting cicadas.

Q: What are some of the things you sell?

A: Greens such as kale, lettuce, and arugula sell really well at the market. So do radishes, for some reason (I don't like them very much). I also make pesto (with the basil that I grow) and grape jelly, and I occasionally have honey. In the spring, I also sell transplants so that people can start their own gardens.

Q: How and where can my family buy your produce?

A: Support the Farm Alliance stand at the Waverly (32nd Street) Farmers Market!



yellowhousefarmbaltimore.com



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