



Home The Inn The Farm Recipes Links What's New

What's New

Home on the Range

Home On The Range

Fountain Prairie Inn And Farms Is The Priskes' Slice Of Heaven

Wisconsin State Journal :: LOCAL/WISCONSIN :: C1

Monday, November 22, 2004

Lesley Rogers Barrett Wisconsin State Journal

FALL RIVER

It's more than a farm.

And it's more than a bed and breakfast.

Tucked away in Fall River, on Highway 16 just outside of Columbus, John and Dorothy Priske are living their dream in a 5,400-square-foot 1899 Queen Anne home. And they're making the home and their 290-acre farm a getaway for city dwellers.

The Priskes bought the property in 1986 and finished much of the restoration of the three-story home two years ago. In January 2003, they opened a five-bedroom bed and breakfast called Fountain Prairie Inn and Farms, which features original woodwork, 10-foot ceilings and 17 rooms.

"Some people come here just to get away. Others come to see the architecture of the house," Dorothy Priske said. "Other people come because they want to look at the cattle. We've had people from Scotland, France, New York, Texas - all over."

The Scottish Highland cattle - those big, shaggy cows with horns - are the highlight of the farm. The Priskes are transitioning from traditional row crops to raising about 180 animals on an all-grass farm.

All the crop land was restored to wetlands, prairie and grass for the cows. They rotate the cattle from area to area, and they typically butcher one animal a week. They sell the beef, which is dry-aged for 21 days, at the Dane County Farmers' Market, from their farm and to area restaurants like Madison's L'Etoile.

"It's some of the best eating meat we've ever had," said John Priske.

Both John, 55, and Dorothy Priske, 54, grew up on Wisconsin farms. Their goal was to be able to farm the land responsibly and afford to stay at home. Dorothy was able to quit her Madison job a few years ago.

They didn't initially think about opening the home as a bed and breakfast. But during restoration, Dorothy Priske said they realized they wanted to share the house with other people. The couple don't have children, but they've always had a home full of visitors. She can seat up to 14 people at the big wooden breakfast table, where she serves guests a traditional farm breakfast.

"I like to cook, I like to take care of people," she said. "We're comfortable with that whole aspect."

Repeat guest Rachel Baron of Evanston, Ill., said she found the farm when they needed a place to stay to see her daughter's performance at a theater camp in Beaver Dam. They've returned

three more times, just to get away from city life, Baron said.

Her son, Quinn, 10, wanted to visit the farm for his birthday. He calls the Priskes "Uncle John" and "Aunt Dorothy."

"It's way beyond a bed and breakfast. It's the experience of discovering what it's like to live on a farm," Baron said.

Even Baron's husband, who was born and raised on a Caribbean island, loves the retreat. They visited last winter and rode on snowmobiles for the first time. Their kids like to help feed the cattle - a life very different from their fast-paced urban one.

"It's about reconnecting with my kids," she said. "There's just so much confusion in life. It's a good reminder of those simple pleasures and rhythms of the farm."

And the Priskes said they love getting to know the guests.

"We learn a lot from the guests, we really do," John Priske said. "We educate, but we really learn."

They got into the Scottish Highland cattle business by accident. They had a couple of Highland cows six years ago to help restore a streambank by naturally grazing the area. With their horns and tougher tongues, the cows graze on lower-quality vegetation. After butchering one for meat, the Priskes realized the beef's quality.

Now, the Priskes said, they own the largest Highland cattle farm in the Midwest.

John Priske, who likes to quote Aldo Leopold and Gandhi, said he just wants to be a good farmer. They're part of the "slow food" movement - aimed at combating fast food.

"The whole thing is just a good feeling," he said. "I'm just so excited about how this is working out. The land will be better when we leave it than when we came here."

For more information

See www.fountainprairie.com or call the inn at 920-484-3618.

[View Our Map](#) W1901 Highway 16, Fall River, WI 53932 priske@centurytel.net
The Inn: (920) 484-3618 Toll Free: (866) 883-4775 [Privacy Statement](#)
[Web design](#) and hosting by [Industry Connection, Inc.](#)