



Blue Moon Acres



Jim and Kathy Lyons of Blue Moon Acres are passionate about lettuce's potential beyond its usual second-fiddle status. They honor each leafy green's individual character—the bite of arugula, the zest of sorrel, the snap of fresh romaine—and see each type as able to both stand on its own and complement a wide variety of flavors and preparations. As Kathy weeds a patch of intensely sweet sucrine lettuce, she talks about her perspective on the direction of attitudes toward food: "There is a new trend for simple and real food." Blue Moon Acres is riding the momentum of that movement with extraordinary success. Focused on just a sliver of the world of produce, they strive to perfect their craft and deliver the most impeccable greens to some of the most demanding restaurants, caterers, and home cooks in the greater New York area.

Jim met Kathy while studying natural healing at the Kushi Institute in Massachusetts. Kathy was trying to break from her family's farming tradition and follow a different career path. "I never wanted to farm," she explains, "but that's all Jim wanted to do." In 1992, with forty subscribers and one greenhouse, the couple established their CSA in Buckingham, Pennsylvania. Initially, they focused on microgreens but soon added full-grown lettuces to their repertoire. In 2008, they expanded to Pennington, New Jersey, giving them more land to accommodate an expanding portfolio of all things leafy and green.

Jim, who has the demeanor of a mad scientist and a deep familiarity with macrobiotics, shares some of his farming philosophy: "Farming is like cooking. You want some creativity but first you need to get the systems down." For example, he explains that at larger farms, soil is seen as secondary to the plants themselves. But Jim knows that in order for lettuces to develop proper flavor, they require nutrient-rich soil: "Organic matter is the living portion of soil. You need to feed it to feed the plants." The Lyons are committed to a unique and sophisticated compost program; a mixture of homemade fertilizer, peat, nitrates, and sulfates is tailor-made for their delicate plants. And the benefits of this attentive approach to farming are obvious: statuesque red romaine, tightly compacted Bibb, and tiny Baby Gem lettuces thrive in topsoils that are markedly vibrant, even to the untrained eye. The harvested results resonate with a singular combination of personality and brawn that is matched by the farmers who nurtured the greens to life.

