



Owners Jim and Kathy Lyons have grown Blue Moon from a one-acre CSA to an impressive seventy-acre operation.

Of Rice and Zen

Blue Moon Acres' mission is to grow produce that nourishes both body and earth.

By KENDRA LEE THATCHER | Photos By DAVE NORTON



“I have always liked the idea of growing what we eat,” says Jim Lyons, co-owner with his wife, Kathy, of Blue Moon Acres, a River Towns farm that has grown from a mere one acre in 1992 to an impressive seventy acres in Buckingham, PA, and Pennington, NJ, with ten greenhouses, seven four-season structures, and six high tunnels that help extend their growing season.

Blue Moon began as a CSA—Community Supported Agriculture—a fledgling farm, growing produce on one tiny acre for its twenty or so members that first year. “We quickly realized we needed something more if we were going to make this work for our family,” Kathy remembers. “We quit our day jobs and dug deep into the soil.”

In 1993, baby greens were still a novelty, but Jim and Kathy began to experiment. With the help of a cousin from New York City, the couple introduced their microgreens to some of the city’s top restaurants. They quickly appeared on tasting menus at critically acclaimed restaurants like Wayne Nish’s March, and over the years, their New York City accounts have grown to over 300, with East Coast culinary luminaries Eric Ripert, Michael Salmonov, and Dan Barber among them.

In addition to their restaurant accounts, Blue Moon Acres distributes to home delivery companies like Farm to People, Fresh Direct, and Zone 7. In season, Kathy says they sell thousands of pounds of produce every week.

A third-generation farmer, Kathy met Jim in the early eighties while they were studying macrobiotics, a way of eating based in Zen

Buddhism that promotes balancing the yin and yang, an education she says taught them balance not only in food—the sweet, the sour, the salty, the pungent—but also in lifestyle.

Married thirty-nine years, Jim and Kathy live at their five-acre farm in Buckingham, PA, and share equally in the business. She manages

Buckingham; he oversees their sixty-three acres of preserved farmland in Pennington, a 2007 acquisition. Kathy manages the microgreens business; Jim handles rice production and processing. Kathy also oversees their organic certification, Blue Moon produce boxes, and their edible flower business.

Jim takes care of soil health, compost and bean production, and implementation of regenerative farming practices.

Their oldest daughter, Ashley, now thirty-six, is Blue Moon Acres’ marketing director. Alissa, thirty-four, is a local fine artist; Christopher, thirty, is a musician in New Orleans.

Rice, a staple in the macrobiotic diet, has always fascinated Jim. Once they were able to get the soil at the Pennington location to cooperate, Jim and Kathy started growing it in 2012. “It’s possible the commercial growing of rice in New Jersey may be unprecedented,” says Kathy. They grow five varieties—Maretelli, long grain brown, medium grain brown, sushi, and black and tan—

none of which are grown in the typical flood-the-fields paddy style, but rather the upland style which rotates overhead watering with irrigation.

“Flooding a rice field is really just a way of weed control,” Jim explains. “It’s also associated with high levels of both arsenic and aluminum,” which he says are bad for gut health. “We have our rice tested frequently for both of these minerals, and





As Kathy moves among tables covered with trays of microgreens, she proudly proclaims, "I am a third generation farmer."

I'm proud to say that we come in at about seventeen parts per billion compared to about 168 parts per billion in other organic brands."

Determined to naturally increase the quality of the food they grow, Jim is experimenting with an innovative composting process that works like a probiotic to optimize the amount of nutrients available to plants, he says.

After finding his rice low in iron, he plans to inoculate this season's crop with his new compost and see if it works. "The timing has to be just right," he says, "but it could be a

game changer." As he squats down before an enormous pile of beautiful dark, rich compost, he adds, "I wake up at 4:00 a.m., and it's all I can think about!"

Continuing to practice what they internalized in their macrobiotics study, Jim and Kathy are dreaming up the next big thing for Blue Moon Acres. Whatever they do, their philosophy of balance will pave the way. 🌊

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Even with their culinary star collaborations, the Lyons keep coming back to their ethos and values: How do we produce nutrient dense, healthy food to nourish both our bodies and the land?