

Farming in the Upstate: Mile Creek Farm—Our Story

By Rodney and Jennifer Morton, Owners/Farmers, Mile Creek Farm

Mile Creek Farm is a family-owned and operated farm located in Pickens County that is supported by a steadfast group of farmhands and vendors. Started by Bobby Morton, the farm is now owned and operated by his son Rodney and his wife Jennifer. They are proud of using no pesticides or harmful chemicals to grow their crops.

Farm life isn't for everyone. It's never a 9 AM to 5 PM workday—some workdays start before sunrise and don't end until well after sunset. And, the work load changes with the season and with the crop schedule. Years ago, we planted a limited number of vegetable crops, such as silver queen corn, blue lake green beans, crooked neck squash, green onions, red potatoes, purple hull crowder peas, and heirloom tomatoes. Rodney remembers when Bobby used their old vintage Ford tractors to plow the ground. Then other family members would throw out fertilizer from 5-gallon buckets before they hand planted individual vegetable seeds purchased from our local feed and seed store.

Much has changed over the past decade—we went from a garden the size of half a football field to multiple fields that add up to three acres. We know we need grow more crops to meet the increasing demand for local, chemical-free vegetables and fruit. But, we decided to limit ourselves to planting a maximum of 10 acres, so that Mile Creek Farms can manage the business and crop rotations, without sacrificing our ability to personally serve our loyal customers.

We believed in our family farm so much that we sold our home last December, invested our return into the farm, and currently reside in our comfy camper across the road from the field where we've been planting for over a decade.

When Mile Creek Farm added strawberries to the list of crops, it became a year-round job. Rodney had talked about growing strawberries for several years before he took the leap of faith and jumped in. First, he asked for help from some well-established farmers he had gotten to know and trusted. Eric Hunter from Hunter Farms has probably answered a billion questions to help Rodney learn all about strawberry farming. Donna Tesner at Beechwood Farms came and laid our drip and beds for this past season. They say it takes an army and it's true! Nothing in commercial farming is a one-man band



Strawberry harvest.

One of the most difficult hurdles in farming is finding people who will work the fields without constant supervision. This year, we have been fortunate to work with the sweetest family—a mother and her two daughters who run circles around us in the fields.

Mile Creek Farm Market, located at 3020 Walhalla Hwy., Six Mile, South Carolina, is the newest addition to our farming business. Previously, we sold our crops at the local farmers markets and at our home. But after selling our home, we had to scout out a new location. We reached out to a family friend who was thrilled to allow us to operate our retail business at the former B&B BBQ restaurant. Many people say it's a great location, and I believe this wholeheartedly; but what I believe in most is that it was in God's plan to have us there because he knows just how hard we work the land that has been given to us to use for the harvest of food for our community and visitors passing through.

“Our customers can call on us at any time and we are there to take a produce order, listen to their needs, and do our best to get each customer what they have requested either from us or from another trusted farmer with whom we partner.” — Farmer/Co-owner, Jennifer Morton

Next year Mile Creek Farm looks forward to rolling out a Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, which will offer customers the opportunity to buy “shares” of the Farm's harvest in advance, and then receive a share of the crops when they are harvested. Participants in the program are guaranteed a set amount of fresh produce throughout the growing season, while supporting the viability of their favorite farm.



While you may come in to buy one thing Mile Creek Farm Market, you'll probably leave with a lot, more including the feeling of being part of our family. Our staff deserves the tip of our hats. There is not a day I haven't seen them walk into work with a smile on their faces. While the market has taken off and become a popular place to shop, our mission will always be to provide only the best quality produce and to shower our customers with Southern hospitality customer service. ❖