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KATE MOUNTAIN FARM

*Where the Future
meets the Past*

BY WILHELM W.KOHL

Design & Pictures: Barbara Meyer zu Altenschildesche



- IN THE MOUNTAINS OF NEW YORK -

*V*ery few people probably remember the Lake Placid Winter Olympics of 1980, but to a generation of Americans, they forever will part of their collective memory.

At the height of the cold war, a purely amateur USA hockey team, consisting mainly of college players, coached by the legendary Herb Brooks, beat a heavily favored Soviet team by a 4:3 final score. The team ended up winning the Olympic gold medal for the second time in the history of the games, beating Sweden in the final. The “miracle on ice”, as the event is known, put Lake Placid and the Adirondack Mountains forever on the map of great winter destinations.

And Aaron & his partner, Kelly Cerialo, are working hard to add one more possible destination to the long list of attractions in the area, by restoring the historic Kate Mountain Farm & Lodge to its former glory.





Like many areas some distance away from major metropolitan populations, many of the small towns, farms and lodges in the Adirondacks have fallen into neglect with the demise of local industry. Aaron grew up in the area and spent part of his youth at Kate Mountain, then owned by his uncle, but had left the area like many others of his age for education and a job in the city. But after some time in Germany and eventually settling in New York City, the memories of Kate Mountain would not leave him alone.



So when the opportunity arose in some years ago to purchase the old farm, located on State Route 3, only 35-40 minutes from Lake Placid, but 5 hours straight north of New York, Aaron jumped on it.

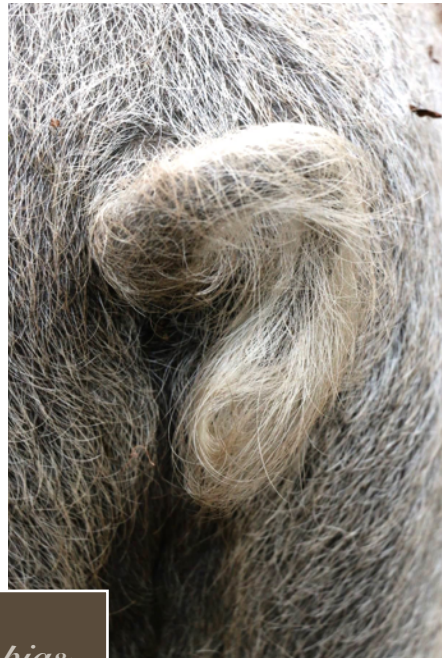


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Aaron raises Mangalitsa pigs in a natural setting



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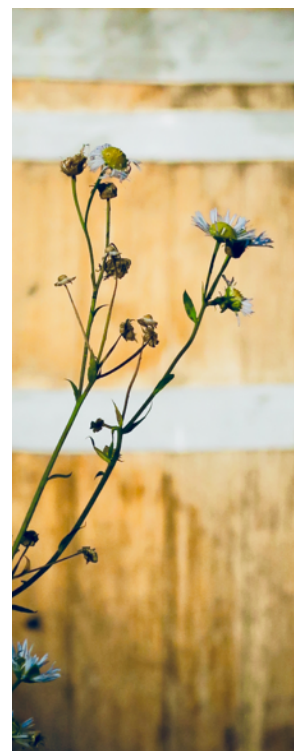


*Happy pigs
with
curly tails*



*K*ate Mountain Farm is a 280 acre biodiverse farm, part of the tri-lakes region of northern New York, and features quite a collection of old buildings, including the original lodge rooming house itself. All of the buildings, in desperate need of tender loving care, are planned to be meticulously refurbished by Aaron & Kelly, who already have made the original lodge their current home.

After meeting Aaron for the first time in Michigan in 2012, when he came to my farm to pick up his first Mangalitsas, we stayed in frequent contact. I finally got to visit his place in July of 2015. Aaron loves to give farm tours, in which he shows off his pigs, market garden and his large collection of old building and machinery, once used in farm operations. The barn, rebuilt from wood cut on the farm, is a great indicator of Aaron's plans or the future.





Kelly and Aaron certainly were excellent hosts for Barbara Meyer zu Altenschildesche and myself, and after a visit to the Andirondack National Park, followed by a great lunch in Lake Placid, we got the tour of the farm.

It's remarkable what Aaron and Kelly have accomplished in such a short period of time. Their grand vision is to turn the mature forest that covers the farm into pockets of flowering meadows; they are using their Mangalitsas to accomplish just that. Starting with ten acres, two of which already have been fenced, the idea is to turn these wooded acres into an "Adirondack Savannah." While the pigs turn the soil for grubs and edible roots, they also fertilize the ground, preparing new seed beds. Once reseeded, those beds will create a veritable salad bar for future generations. Not just future generations of pigs, but all types of grazing animals, from cows to sheep and goats.



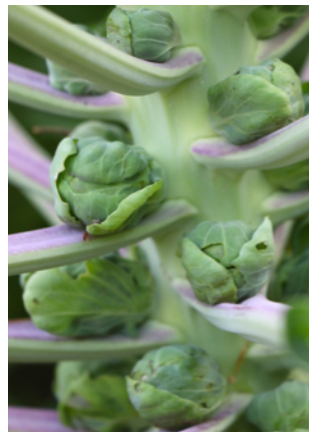
The Mangalitsas are turning the forest to farmland



The master plan includes not just flowering meadows, but fruit orchards, vegetable stands, pens for free ranging chickens and turkeys, and plenty of grasslands for wildlife and future visitors to enjoy. The pigs are playing an essential role in this transformation, and Aaron and Kelly are committed to the symbiotic relationship. Aaron has spent significant time studying the Mangalitsas, including their day to day management, their genetics, and their feed needs.

The soil on his farm is rather fragile and tricky, but Aaron has found a great solution – brewer’s mash. “The brewer’s mash is one of the best available soil amendments the pigs have to further that transformation. Our paddocks are like spongy springboards to walk on...the stuff definitely helps mitigate soil compaction, erosion, and holds water and nutrients.”

I have the same experience on my own farm, where we use brewer’s mash as a supplemental feed, adding fiber to the pigs digestive system, while at the same time increasing organic matter in the soil.

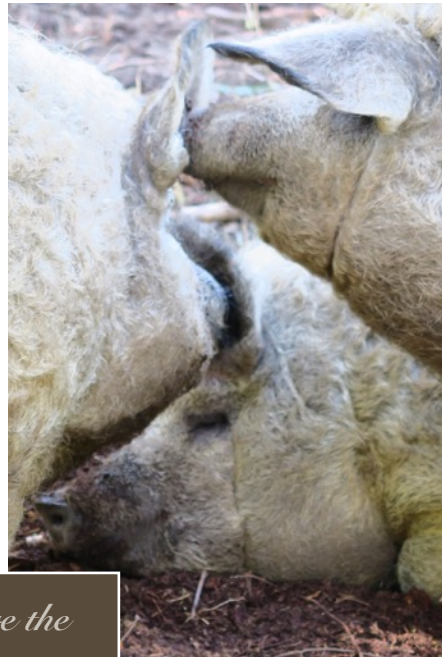


Aaron, quite a chef himself, and an incredible handy man with skills from carpentry to mechanics, prepared a great dinner the evening of our visit, and the stories about Kelly’s new life in Upstate New York were most entertaining. Especially after several glasses of wine, there was a lot of laughter about the trials and tribulations of a city girl away from home.





©Anke Rijksen



*"Where the
forest
shares it's
secrets"*



Kelly grew up in New Jersey, and basically lived in the New York/New Jersey area, i.e. the big city all her life. So moving to Vermontville brought some major changes to her life.

Can you imagine most young ladies chasing pigs in deep snow in the dark? (Assisted by a State Trooper that originally wanted to shoot them for public safety). Or feeding an outside wood burner in knee deep snow fifty yards from the front door?

Kelly's day job is at Paul Smith's College, where she is a professor in the Hospitality Department while working on her doctorate degree. Aaron commutes to New York City most weeks for his work as a film producer, but the farm and their Mangalitsas are their real love.

We were some of the first guests at the lodge, but there is no reason why Kate Mountain Farm



could not lodge visitors interested in hiking or cross country skiing its extensive trails. Since much of the pork and produce grown on the farm is sold at Saranac Lake restaurants, some of their customers might want to take the opportunity to learn more about the farm, or even vacation there. This concept is very popular in Europe, where many farms offer guest rooms, some in exchange for a few days' work on the farm.

Just like Kelly and Aaron, some of them might even fall in love with the idea of producing some of their own food, or at least knowing exactly where it came from.

Kate Mountain Farm certainly has a great past, and thanks to their new owners, a bright future.



The perfect place for visitors to learn about organic agriculture



Kelly Geriolo & Aaron Caiazza

KATE MOUNTAIN FARM



Royal Mangalitsa

216 E SHOESMITH RD, HASLETT, MI 48840 - USA

Additional Pictures: Ben Starkman & Anke Rijkse