|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Munson’s Pickle and Preserves Farm | |
|  |  |



# our Story

The Munsons have been raising crops and honeybees on their farm since the mid-1800s.Twenty years ago, they planted a few rows of sweet corn alongside the road so they could have fresh corn for their family. The few rows produced more corn than we could eat, so we put a sign along the road and sold the extras to neighbors passing by. Eventually, other vegetables were added to the garden and Munson’s pickles and preserves prepared from the produce became very popular.

The spring season includes planting…much of it done by volunteers. Strawberries are the big seller during the spring. And there is a lot of work in managing the sage and wildflower fields and the 40 beehives that produce honey and wax for the farm shop.

Summer is busy with harvesting the vegetables and fruits for the farm market, local fairs, and the in-house preservation of pickles and jams.

Munson’s goal is to produce top quality produce and provide families with something they cannot find anywhere else.

A highlight of the summer is the Balloons and Blueberries festival which is attended by thousands and includes opportunities for family fun and good eating. Several local restaurants host farm-to-table menus and events that keep everyone busy with planning menus and promoting events. The Honey Fest in another growing attraction for Munson's that requires a lot of planning and volunteers to manage

Autumn is a special time for Munson's. Even though the days are shorter it doesn’t mean there is less work to do. Everyone is busy harvesting the end-of-summer produce, preserving the harvest, and planning special fall events. One of the highlights of the fall is the Harvest Fest that includes wagon rides, corn mazes, pumpkin patches, apple picking, and hands-on apple pressing for cider. Munson's is a destination for school trips and family “agricultural tourism.”

Munson's Pickles and Preserves are investigating new agricultural ventures.

## Strategic Highlights

* CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) project for community members to become “farm members” and purchase shares of the produce to feed their families. Each week they receive a box of fresh produce. They can participate in farm events such as workdays, potlucks, and you-pick gardens to experience the joy of harvesting their own food.
* To support the local economy, Munson's works with several other companies in the community to provide services for their employees, volunteers, and customers.

## Looking Ahead

The Munson's are developing a wider online presence for communications with customers as well as an online market to distribute their products and gift certificates.

## Munson’s Pickles and Preserves featured staff

### Marcos Serna: Farm General Manager

Marcos Serna grew up on his family's farm near Yakima, WA. When an accident limited his father's ability to work, Marcos and his older brother quickly learned how to keep things humming on the farm. His older brother also had some other ideas about how to run the farm. "My older brother saw an opportunity to change things and my father was opposed to it, so there was some conflict there. But after the accident, we started moving towards being an organic farm, and it worked out well for us. Eventually, my father came around." After proving himself on the family farm, Marcos began looking for opportunity elsewhere and soon discovered Munson's. He became General manager five years ago. A self-described "barbeque fanatic", Marcos makes a skirt steak that will change your life. His Treasured and hard-working 1947 pickup truck is a big people magnet at farm events.

### Fen Long: Irrigation Engineer

"Really, I'm a math person" says Fen Long. Always good at numbers and in love with the freeways of her Los Angeles childhood, Fen decided to become a civil engineer. As she studied further, she realized that she was fascinated by the flow of water and how to manage it, another issue troubling LA. After a dissertation on the irrigation history of the Phoenix, AZ region, she worked at the United States Bureau of Reclamation. Work at the Bureau led to an opportunity as a consultant on irrigation and drainage matters. One of her clients was a farmer. Visiting the farm changed her life. "I was sick of being in an office juggling numbers when here was this farm actually doing the work. I could drive a tractor and grade a field for proper drainage. I could adjust sprinkler flow rates for soil composition. I could really affect the world, one field at a time." Fen is now the proud irrigation engineer at Munson's Pickles and Preserves Farm.

### Hilary Brennan: Greenhouse Manager

Hilary Brennan was "what they call an Army brat,” she jokes. She was always moving from army base to army base as her dad’s military assignments changed. She started keeping small potted plants indoors at an early age. "We couldn't have a garden because we weren't in any one place long enough to make it worthwhile." She discovered she had a knack for making plants grow. Her first job at a flower stand led to work at a plant store, a nursery, and now Munson's Farm. "When I started here, I was terrified inside because it was my first real managerial position, but the people here are really supportive and I quickly felt at ease." Her second year at the greenhouse was the most productive in Munson's history. Despite the rootless feeling of her youth, Hilary loves to travel and recently returned from two weeks in Iceland.

### Fernando Vasquez: Beekeeper

Fernando Vasquez was working in a bookstore in Passaic, NJ, after studying Spanish literature when a co-worker and friend asked for help with a gardening project. The friend and his wife had decided they were going to try to grow their own food and needed some help preparing the yard. They had bought a hive of bees and the box was on a shaky platform. The son of a carpenter, Fernando threw himself into making a better platform for the bees and was amazed that working around the bees disturbed them so little. "I never knew before how different bees are from wasps. You can't do anything around a wasp, but bees really leave you alone, even if you're close by." As he helped his friends till the yard, he began to grasp how vital the bees were to the project and growing food in general. As he learned about bees and their behavior, he became hooked and soon had an apiary of his own. Fifteen years and many bee boxes later, he is beekeeper at Munson's. Fernando is also a published poet and enthusiastic cabinetmaker.