

Hausman Fruit Farm

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"When people taste them, they keep coming back for more," Miriam said of the Holland tomato varieties that they grow.

The tomatoes are planted in January and harvesting begins in April.

The tomatoes are planted in a peat-type mix and are watered for about 5 minutes a day. Fresh air is constantly heated rather than circulated in the greenhouse.

"It's more expensive that way, but it works better for the humidity," Keith said.

The 800 tomato plants per greenhouse grows to a height of seven to 8 feet. Each blossom is pollinated by hand by tickling the cluster at least every other day.

Miriam operates the Fruit Shoppe on the farm, where in addition to fruit and vegetables, she sells gift items, dairy products, pottery, fruit baskets, and ships holiday fruit packages.

Miriam also raises bedding plants in addition to asparagus, peppers, and geraniums. The farm carries its own line of jellies and jams. At first Miriam made them, but now she has someone else make them.

She delivers fruit baskets to area hospitals.

The store is closed Sunday and Monday through the winter, but opens on Monday through Saturday in the middle of May. From August through October, the store is open seven days a week.

Carol, Keith's wife, is in charge of bookkeeping and a stand at Quakertown Farmers Market. One of the Hausmans' recent ventures is tailgate marketing at the outdoor Farmers' Market in Perkasie.

"The town is really behind the outdoor market," Keith said. "It's in the middle of town where a former lumberyard that burned down

is located. It is open only during the summer months from 7 a.m. to 12 p.m. on a Saturday, but we do very well because the people really support it.

"One of the biggest misconceptions that people have about fruit growing is that we vacation in Florida every winter because we don't have anything to do," Keith said. "Actually orchards require year-round labor. It takes us the entire winter to prune trees, pack fruit, and repair the equipment and we still don't get done."

But Keith isn't complaining. "I love the work. I always did. I like the freedom and openness. I especially like springtime for the weather and the work, but that's when the cash flow is at the lowest, so I guess I should like summer best," Keith said, "that's when the money comes in."

Keith is determined to keep the business a family farm.

"A lot of orchards are going out of business because expenses are growing every year and receipts are no higher than 10 years ago," he said. "We need to become more and more efficient to make a profit. The most effective way is to sell more retail."

Competition from Washington State apples is enormous.

"The state spends a lot of money on advertising and they buy up supermarket space," Keith said. "Area stores mark up my apples 150 percent and if I complain, they say that they'll just buy more apples from Washington state. There isn't much that I can do except to concentrate more on retail at our store and market stands."

The Hausman Fruit Farm and Fruit Shoppe is located at Limeport Pike, R.D. 2, Box 652, Coopersburg, PA 18036, (215) 967-2440.



Miriam is in charge of the Fruit Shoppe located on the farm. She also packs holiday gift boxes and fruit baskets for delivery.

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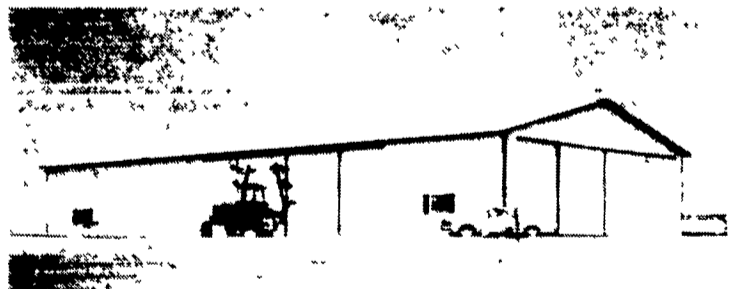
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