

Let's talk about it.

-Sally Caldwell

## A Community that Grows Together..

Ripe tomatoes, sweet strawberries, fresh corn on the cob, southern okra, butter beans, and juicy watermelon are just some of the fresh farm produce being grown in Abbeville County's backyard. Are you hungry yet?

Produce is not just for the cold section in the grocery store. Fresh, locally grown produce is found right in the backyard of your community, and one of these backyards happens to be Vince Maloney's in Donalds, South Carolina. After living in Spokane, Washington for many years, Vince opted for a change of pace and decided to move to Donalds to farm. He worked in the aviation industry for many years, honing his business acumen which he now applies to the business of farming. Vince farms not only because he loves working with his hands, but also because he wants to leave behind something valuable and sustainable for his own family and also for the community around him. As Vince says, "You won't find a friendlier neighborhood." He loves farming here, and Donalds loves having him here!



*Delicious vegetables grow in their assigned rows at Vince Maloney's farm.*

Vince benefits the community not only with his skilled farming but also with his knowledge in the business world. Vince brings more to the horticulture table than just his fresh fruits and vegetables. He knows the ins and outs of the business of farming and so helps those around him when he can.



*Just a few of the ripe, beautiful products grown at Parisi Farms.*

Speaking of fresh produce, Parisi Farms in Abbeville, South Carolina is known for their pesticide-free and chemical-free plants.

Penny Parisi owns this farm and began it when she moved from Florida to Abbeville, South Carolina. When she moved here, she found that the food in Florida compared quite differently to the food in South Carolina. So, she decided to use her knowledge of Floridian produce and grow her own fresh food. Parisi Farms is one of few farms that grows crops completely free of pesticides or chemicals. This farm started in 2007 and since then has blossomed into many acres of the good food and plants that the community loves to buy. They sell many products, including squash, watermelon, peppers, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, and their best-selling tomatoes.

Parisi Farms' crops are grown according to the season, ensuring that customers get the best quality of that season's produce. By being pesticide and chemical free, Penny Parisi serves the community through teaching those who visit her farm about the harmful effects that some sprays and chemicals can have on plants and therefore on the consumer's body. The farm also gives back to the community whenever they can by donating to soup kitchens, food pantries, and more.

Whether she is growing or giving, Penny knows that her farm provides good food for the good people in our community. Like other growers and sellers in Abbeville County, Penny Parisi loves the people that surround her farm: "The people are kind and humble...I love it here." The more Parisi Farms grows for our community, the more the community grows together and towards self-sustainment.

If you cannot quite make it out to these farms, let the farm come to you at Ferguson's Produce in Abbeville, South Carolina. Carol Ferguson began the business and then passed



*Austin Wilson stocks fresh tomatoes at Ferguson's Produce.*

it on to his son and daughter, Buster and Janet Ferguson. Ferguson's Produce's reputation is just as favorable as the fresh, delectable fruits and veggies that they sell. This shop features some of the best produce available in Abbeville County, along with plenty of other products and groceries.

Ferguson's sells to local restaurants as well as to the

public. Both Janet and Buster truly enjoy the relationships with their patrons, whether they are long-time regulars or individuals that are new to their market. "Everybody knows everybody," said Janet with a smile. Like most people in Abbeville County, Janet loves the small-town feel surrounding her. Not only does everybody know everybody, but everybody knows Ferguson's Produce! "We try to provide the best quality available," commented Janet. The store stocks new products weekly, sometimes even twice a week, guaranteeing that the shelves will be packed with fresh food.

Just as Ferguson's Produce is dedicated to selling quality products, the Produce Patch in Due West, South Carolina likewise sells some of the best food around. The Produce Patch is the first grocery store to set foot in the college town of Due West. Cindy Adams is the owner, and began the new Produce Patch much to the small town's delight. Now that Due West has a grocery store, business is booming for Cindy and her team. Even the look inside the shop is warm and welcoming. "I want it to look really, really old," Cindy remarked as she talked about her grandfather and his old tobacco barn, the inspiration for the unique look of the Produce Patch.

The vintage-look of the shop is the only aged quality in the store. Everything else is fresh and new, from the milk and cheeses to the fresh vegetables and fruit placed in the homemade produce stand that greets you when you open the



*Larry Posley and Cindy Adams show off the fresh fruits and vegetables and various other products at the Produce Patch.*

door. Although she gets her products from reputable places all over South Carolina, Cindy buys from many farmers that go to her directly with their products. "This is for the people," Cindy said as she looked around her successful store.

As farmers and store owners continue to grow and expand their businesses and products, so does the community of the Freshwater Coast continue to grow economically and agriculturally.