

Terra Firma Helps Put Agriculture on the Map in Revelstoke

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When you think about the economy around Revelstoke in southeastern BC, forestry, the railroad and tourism probably come to mind before agriculture. The landscape is gradually changing however as the potential for more farming is being demonstrated. Leading the pack is Terra Firma, a diversified certified organic farm started by Terra Park and husband Rob Jay, now one of the largest farms in the Columbia River Valley.



With some farming experience in their backgrounds and a shared passion to jump in to farming full time, Terra and Rob moved their four children to the initial 5-acre parcel they leased on Highway 23 South in 2010. The farm grew steadily over six seasons and in 2015 the couple decided to take it to the next level. They purchased an additional 30 acres across the highway from their original location, where they live and farm today. Five acres are dedicated to ground crops and 5 acres to livestock. Customers include a steadily growing 60+ member CSA program, a loyal following at the Revelstoke Farmer's Market and local restaurants and grocers catering to discerning foodies.

The couple were careful not to grow too fast and each year they experimented with different revenue streams and set new financial goals. As a ticketed millwright and welder, Rob's

training has not only provided necessary off-farm income in the early years, his skills have been invaluable when it comes to building and repairing equipment and improving efficiencies. Terra's studies in holistic nutrition shaped her understanding of the farm as a whole and the symbiotic relationships between each system. From a wide range of vegetables to ethically-raised pigs and chickens, everything is growing using methods that are good for the earth and good for people.



According to the 2014 Revelstoke Food Security Strategy, 98% of Revelstoke's food is imported from 250 kilometres or more from town, and "little active farming" is taking place on nearby agricultural lands. "The need to adapt to the area's wet climate in spring and fall is one of the reasons there aren't more farms in the area," says Terra. "Lettuce and other greens – which grow well in cool, wetter climates – are among the things we grow best."



When Terra Firma was recognized as Business of the Year by Kootenay Business magazine in 2017, the couple saluted their customers as the greatest reason for the farm's success. "We believe our high customer retention is due to the fact our customers feel that our farm is also their farm," says Terra. "People want to be connected to the land and the people that are growing their food. We feel so grateful to be able to experience that connection, and I think it goes both ways."