

MN Agriculture: Marie Dranttel - "Watermelon Diva"

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Day 2 of my “30 Days of MN Agriculture” is Marie Dranttel. Marie lives in St. Peter, MN and grows watermelons and pumpkins. Even though Marie is only about 70 minutes away, I was not aware of her watermelons. Now, I will be seeking her out during the next growing season to buy myself one of those watermelons! One of her customers commented, “Best watermelons ever.” and “Great, locally grown watermelons with very good prices.”

St. Peter is located southwest of Minneapolis and is the home of Gustavus Adolphus College. St. Peter is located near the Minnesota River and has a little bit of everything — prairies, woods, rivers, and lakes.

Social Media Sites:

Facebook – [The Watermelon Diva](#)

Blog – [The Watermelon Diva](#)



Watermelons from the “Watermelon Diva”

Tell me a little about your farm and/or business?

“I am the self-proclaimed “Watermelon Diva” of southern Minnesota. I have a small acreage dedicated to watermelons, squash and pumpkins. In addition, I am a Certified Public Accountant and a Nicollet County Commissioner. I’m busy all the time. On Tuesdays in September I can be found at the office located in the Government Center for a Commissioner meeting and I finish out the day at the Farmer’s Market.”

How long have you farmed or been in business?

“On and off over the last 75 years. Various members of my family have grown some type of fruits and vegetables. My great grandmother grew raspberries and strawberries to supplement her income and as a single parent — raised 11 children. My grandparents grew it all (25-35 acres) for 52 years! My parents were primarily row crop farmers with the occasional canning crop. Since 2001, we’ve (my sister, Jean and I) had a small plot of melons.”



Watermelons

Tell me a little about what you grow/raise/produce/or service provided.

“Watermelons, multiple varieties, squash, a few pumpkins and very few cantaloupes.”

Where do you sell? Who is your end consumer?

“I sell at the St. Peter Farmer’s Market from mid-August until frost wipes out the melon crop. At one point, early on, we sold to local restaurants and Gustavus Adolphus College.”



Melon patch

What makes your farm/business unique or special? What are you most proud of?

“The generations of family members who have worked hard to make a living farming. The farm is located north of St. Peter on the sand prairie—our soil is extremely light.

It always amazes me when customers (older generations) comment that they bought produce 60 years ago from my grandparents. It is nice to know that customers appreciate the work that goes into the end product.”

[Interesting note here – my grandparents also grew vegetables and fruits and sold them to local customers. People also have told me they remember buying product from them. It is a special memory to me because I never knew my grandparents.](#)

Why do you raise produce? What went into your decision to do what you do?

“When my sister, Jean, and I first decided to grow and market, we thought it would be fun and it would be a great way to share a part of our youth with her son. Several years ago, health/work issues limited her time and it became a solo gig. I miss working with them, but at the same time, I still enjoy getting my hands “dirty.”

Today, “patch time” is relaxing. Yes, a lot of the hoeing, weeding, picking, packing, hauling is

physical labor. Yet, I find it *calming*. It's my attitude adjustment time. I never regret garden time, which is my world is at dawn and dusk."

If there is one thing you could change about farming it would be . . .

"Ha – no weeds and no deer. Weeds always flourish in every type of soil and weather. Deer – hmm, deer really like cantaloupe and pumpkins. Deer patrol and control is a daily battle."



Watermelons

What is one interesting fact about your crop you would like to share.

"Make sure your watermelon is ripe. When the belly is yellow and the curl (tendrill where the stem meets the vine) is dry, it means it's ripe. Thumping, smelling, shaking are unnecessary. Every once in a while I am wrong!"

What is the most embarrassing moment you have had on the farm?

"Hmmm – chasing deer across the newly picked sweet corn field in a Ford Edge. The buggers were noshing on the most beautiful pumpkin crop and I was frustrated. Evidently, I wasn't very intimidating. They were back nibbling in less than an hour.

The car survived . . . “

What is your favorite Minnesota location?

“St. Peter/Nicollet County — 15 miles from everything. Prairies, woods, rivers, lakes – surrounded by the best Mother Nature has to offer.”

Anything else to add?

“Dream big and follow your heart . . . “

There are others that are also participating in the 30 Days of Blogging Challenge. Feel free to check these out:

- [Janice Person aka JP Loves Cotton: A Month of Memories](#)
- [Rural Route 2 – 30 Days of Farm Girl Faith](#)
- [Prairie Californian – 30 Days of Food](#)
- [Mackinson Dairy – Women in Dairy](#)

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