

# Miller Family Homestead: Locally raised beef direct from the family farm

BY CHERYL ALLEN

Some of us are wanderers, never quite sure of what it is we should do in life. Others of us have a reliable sense of direction right from the start.

Craig Miller is one of the latter; today, with his wife Joy, he is raising his children on the same farm where he grew up. He follows in the footsteps of his dad, who also grew up on that same farm in Riverside.

Craig always knew he wanted to be a farmer. "I used to have little toys," he says. "I farmed the dining room floor many times."

"I love livestock," he confirms while we stand looking out at 150 head of Holstein and Black Angus cross cattle at various life stages, from milk-dependent calves to market-ready adults. "I've loved playing in the dirt for a long time." "They were doing dairy until 2012," Joy says of the farm's history. That was the year she and Craig married; "Since then, we've continued to raise bucket bottle calves and raise them out to market cattle," she says.

Their 200-acre farm is small by conventional standards, and the Millers have to maximize their resources if it's going to support their family of 6 and Craig's parents as well. By 2018, they felt the need to diversify from just selling cattle at the Kalona Sales Barn, so "After looking at all of our options, we decided to go the route of trying to get our beef directly into the hands of the people who eat it," Joy says.

Selling direct meant bringing their beef to Farmer's Markets, so they packed a freezer and headed out to the Thursday evening market in Wash-

ington.

"We did that about a year, and then our customers were saying, 'This is really nice that you bring these frozen packages of raw beef, but I really want you to cook it for us,'" Joy recounts. "So we started small. We just had a tabletop grill. We grilled burgers, and then we grilled more burgers, and people really loved that aspect."

Many would agree that there is nothing like a hot, grilled burger on a warm summer night. The Millers' burgers are especially good; the



TONIA POOLE

Meet the Millers. Back row: Carol and Nelson (Craig's parents), Joy and Craig, baby Kenzie. Front row: Dexter (8), Kendrick (4), and Tyrell (6).

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