

7th Heaven Organics



Usually, people develop land; but, every once in a while, it is the land that transforms us—and the latter could be said of Jennifer and Chuck Lenet whose life forever changed after buying an 80-acre parcel of farming paradise in a scenic canyon in Cayucos in 1994.

Chuck, who has been a real estate broker for the past 35 years, and who, with Jennifer, ran Morro Creek Nursery and Landscape Company for 15 years and recently started Pinnacle Realty, had always wanted to buy a few acres to grow avocados. But, “When you have beautiful, loamy, fertile soil in a level area, you can’t help but plant it,” Jennifer says. And things kind of grew from there.

It helped, of course, that Jennifer was no newcomer to farming, having had an impressive 35-year career in agriculture, which included obtaining a degree in agriculture from Cal Poly, becoming a Pest Control Advisor, working as an Agricultural Inspector for the SLO County Ag Commissioner, and managing a 40-acre lily farm in Humboldt County. “The tough choice,” she says of her family’s project, “was deciding what to plant and when.”

So, with virgin soil and adventurous spirits beckoning, and the enterprising help of Mark Gaskell, farm advisor for the Santa Maria office of Cooperative Extension, the Lenets had their *hay* day experimenting with produce and building their now fruitful 7th Heaven Organics farm from the ground up. “Farming on virgin soil in an area which has never been farmed makes you the pioneer who either reaps the benefits or suffers from the whims of heat, frost, or a well drying out (which we experienced last year),” Jennifer says,

recounting their early adventures (and misadventures) with Fuji apples, avocados, and, after some “cajoling,” the blueberries for which the Lenets are well-known in the area. Since then, they have grown a diversity of rare crops, including chestnut, Persian mulberry, lychee, banana, mango, and macadamia nut trees, and every imaginable shade of berry.

Aside from variety, the Lenets’ farm provides healthy, all organic, fresh produce that the community has come to count on. “I have been personally involved in the organic movement since I was 16,” says Jennifer, adding that her family’s history of cancer and heart issues, and observations from her career in agriculture “have strengthened my commitment to organic as being the only choice for a healthy society and a healthy planet.”

Chuck, Jennifer, and their 15-year-old daughter, Whitney, are completely devoted to the often painstaking farm work, picking one berry at a time and doing all weeding by hand. Jennifer says, however, that “The hardest part of farming is you are busiest in the summer months when it seems everyone else is on vacation; but living in a beautiful valley close to the ocean helps us to realize how lucky we are to live and work here.”

And with one glimpse of their farm—the babbling creeks, golden rolling hills, verdant valleys, and picture perfect view of Morro Rock—you might say they’re in seventh heaven on earth.