

KEEFER FAMILY PROFILE



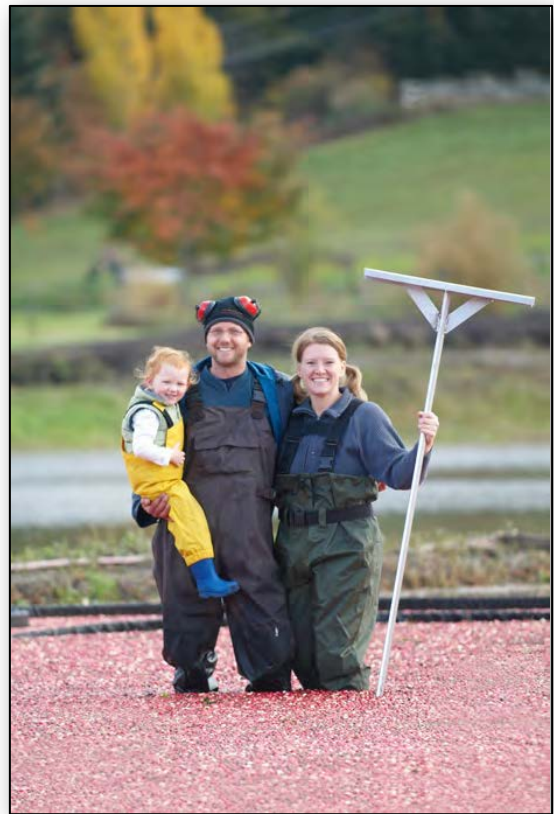
You could say that farming is in the blood for Grant Keefer, a third generation farmer whose family has been growing cranberries since 1991. His Grandfather first purchased farmland in Richmond in 1945 and his family has farmed many different commodities since then from cattle to corn, strawberries to greenhouse vegetables, and more. That Richmond farm remains in the Keefer family to this day.

The Keefer family truly define what a BC farmer is all about ... try and try again until you find what works! For the Keefers it is cranberries and we couldn't be prouder to have them as one of our amazing cranberry farm families.

When you ask Grant why he followed his father and grandfather into farming, he humbly says "I enjoyed it and my Dad asked me to." This simple statement is even more powerful when you find that he holds a Degree in Human Kinetics that he never used. For Grant, cranberry farming is so much more than a "job", it is a lifestyle. It is about satisfying work that also enables him to spend time with his family throughout the day, even if that means having his children join him with "chores". While the days can be long no two days are the same, this change is something that keeps Grant invigorated every day.

As Grant says, "I know cranberries are not a necessity in a person's diet, but it is nice to know we are growing healthy, traditional food."

Cranberries are indeed a tradition, not just around our families' kitchen tables at the most traditional of meals, but also for centuries in North America. Cranberries are one of only three indigenous, commercially grown, berries in North America and our First Nation's people knew the value of cranberries, both as a food and a currency. Cranberries were traded to the Hudson's Bay Company for goods. At that time, cranberries were a necessity. There were used by sailors on the western seaboard to prevent scurvy.



Cranberry harvest is exciting and nerve wracking. Excitement for knowing what the year's work and weather has produced in volume and nerve wracking because as Murphy's Law states, and as we all know, *"Anything that can go wrong will go wrong"*. This is the time of year when equipment breakdowns, transport delays, etc. can turn your day upside down and while things can and do go wrong our farmers handle it with aplomb. These challenges are part of what makes Grant's day interesting. These challenges, too, have not gone unnoticed by the public with their respect for our farmers as they learn more about what they do to provide food to their neighbours and communities around the world.

"I have noticed a change in thinking, by the public, they seem to have more respect for what farmers do." That is a source of pride for Grant. "People love what we do, more than we do" says Grant, "we don't even think about it, it is just what we do."

Thinking what they do as unremarkable is the trademark of a farmer, and they couldn't be more wrong. In cranberries, the desire for the public to learn and see more about what they do is remarkable. When asked about the unique challenges that farming in BC brings – geography, economics, etc. – what comes to mind for Grant is the difficulty in providing access to the public to cranberry farming and cranberry harvest. The challenge of farming "right in the city" on the urban/rural edge has brought the public to the farm literally. "We live side-by-side with the non-farming community and as much as we want to include them in what we do, our farms are our businesses and to ensure that we can get our job done in a safe manner we have to keep the public at a distance."

That interest from the public doesn't end in wanting to see the harvest, they are also interested in what farmers do to protect their crops. "Our farms are where we live, where we raise our families. As farmers we need to protect our crops and we only do what we have to in order to ensure our plants remain healthy and we produce high quality fruit for the public. We are fortunate in cranberry farming to not require too many products to do this."

On what it means to farm in BC, Grant says "We know we are part of a bigger picture, we love to share what we do on our farm." At the Keefer farm in Ladysmith, Yellow Point Cranberries, the public can do just that. Yellow Point has "open days" to include their neighbours in as much as possible in the process of growing cranberries in BC. Here, the public is also able to purchase fresh, in season, cranberries.

For many farms, their product goes directly to an Ocean Spray receiving station in Richmond or Langley. On this, Grant does hope that consumers will consider supporting BC farmers by purchasing Ocean Spray products. Ocean Spray is a grower cooperative that is owned by farmers. Approximately, 95% of our farmers in BC are Ocean Spray farmers.



Grant believes that cranberry farming in BC has a strong future, for his family and the rest of the BC cranberry farm families. Asked whether he would like to see his children continue his family's farming legacy and follow him into cranberry farming he says, in his humble way, "I hope they would like to." Given the strong example of family, lifestyle and his love of farming that he has shown to his children that decision may already have been made. After speaking to Grant on why he loves what he does, who wouldn't want to be a cranberry farmer?

Funding support provided, in part, by the BC Government's Buy Local Program; delivered by the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC with funding from the BC Ministry of Agriculture

