Hi and Happy New Year! I'm reaching out with information on our Farmer Training Program - in Interior Alaska. We are still accepting applications for the 2013 season. The program is designed for aspiring farmers, farm-based educators and those interested in local food systems. Participants live on the farm and participate in the full range of farm activities in addition to learning farm budgeting and planning, basic blacksmithing, wool processing, wood-working, food preservation and more!

Please pass this info on to any students, alumni or folks who might be interested! It is a really fun and educational experience. We are working with the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, in order for students to receive credit for the course, details on that will be available soon!

thanks so much!

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Calypso’s Farmer Training Program
updated for the 2013 season

ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS NOW!
(6 spaces available)
Open until filled – if you’re interested, apply now!
We hope to have these spaces filled by the end of December, but will continue taking
applications until the spaces are filled.

Dates: May 1st – September 30th, 2013
Tuition: $1,500 for the season ($300/month).
Tools and Supplies: $150 fee will cover your personal tools and educational supplies
(including a “Reader” with a large selection of articles and book excerpts), which you
can take with you when you leave. You will also have access to specialized tools and
supplies (carving tools, etc) throughout the program.
Housing: Program participants are provided with very rustic accommodations and a
shared kitchen. A $100 cleaning deposit will be required and returned at the end of the
season after personal and communal spaces are vacated and clean.
Food Provided: Basic food staples AND vegetables during the production season
(early June – September) are provided throughout the apprenticeship.
College Credit: may be possible, contact us to discuss this further.

Calypso’s Farmer Training Program
Calypso’s Farmer Training Program is an intensive experiential education program focused on providing the skills,
inspiration and experience necessary for participants to embark on starting their own small farm with confidence.

Participants learn how to become self-reliant farmers by working alongside experienced farmers through the entire
growing season from caring for greenhouse transplants, prepping the field for planting, planting, seeding, harvesting,
managing soil fertility, weed and pest management, caring for farm animals, operating a CSA, running a farm
stand, selling to local restaurants, working in natural alignment to prevent injury and more. Guided training in art
and craft skills such as wood carving, basic tool making, papermaking, metal working, wool processing, etc is also
provided.

Calypso’s unique setting also provides exposure to and experience with farm-based environmental education, orga-
nizing and running community events and a variety of practical homesteading skills (building, cooking, baking in a
wood-fired oven, working with wool, metal-smithing, woodworking, birch bark weaving and more!).

This training program immerses you in farming, therefore the majority of the training is experiential and field and
farm based, however the program also includes, topical workshops, a season-long creative farm business planning
project, discussion groups, visits to other farms and involvement in farm-based youth education.

The program is tailored to each participant’s needs by allowing the opportunity to take on increasing responsibility in core areas and in areas of special interest.

Educational Methods
Farming Immersion
The majority of the training is experiential and field and farm based. Participants are part of the team that is running the farm for the season. Regular hands-on, field-based trainings will support skill and confidence building. Participants will also take on increasing responsibility in specific areas throughout the season.
“Create your own Farm”
In order to cover the broad topic of successful farm business planning, participants will meet weekly for 8 weeks to work step by step to create a farm on paper. This creative exercise will cover choosing a site, drawing a site map, farm planning and design, crop planning and rotation, creating a marketing plan, budgeting and more!

Farming Workshops
Topic specific workshops will be offered throughout the season (an average of 1-2/month), covering a broad range of topics from humane chicken butchering to baking in a wood fired oven. Other topics include; food preservation, interpreting soil test results, greenhouse design and others.

Art & Craft Workshops
Weekly workshops focused on a variety of art and craft skills will be offered throughout the season. Topics will include birch bark weaving, spoon carving, spinning, knitting, weaving, paper and book making, and more!

Farm-based Environmental Education
Over 1,500 children visit the farm each year on field trips. We strive to integrate all Farmer Training participants into this farm-based youth programming in some way. Most will assist with leading field or forest based activities for 2-4 hours/week, others may choose to get more involved by leading additional weekly field trips.

Group Discussions
Participants will assist researching and leading group discussions (an average of once/month) on a variety of topics chosen by the group. Topics may include: understanding the Farm Bill, food justice, GMO labeling, community food security… Some group discussions may center around watching a film together.

Farm Visits
In order to expose participants to other styles and types of farming operations, we will visit 3-4 other farms in the area throughout the season. Most visits will include a farm tour and several hours of helping out with a project at the host farm.

Farmer Training Program Instructors:

Susan Willsrud, Farm Director and co-founder of Calypso, has led the farm design and production since Calypso’s beginning in 2000. She has an extensive science background, with a B.A. in Botany and Zoology and a M.S. in Plant Ecology. Creating a healthy farm ecosystem is her on-going goal. Susan also loves working with the wool provided by Calypso’s beautiful flock of Shetland sheep! Susan leads the Farmer Training Program and will work side-by-side with participants throughout the growing season.

Tom Zimmer, Ecology Center Director and co-founder of Calypso, is responsible for the farm infrastructure (buildings, numerous projects, etc) and is responsible for the care of Calypso’s chickens, sheep, goats and other assorted animals. Tom is a skilled environmental educator and is instrumental in all of Calypso’s farm-based education. He is currently building a blacksmith shop and looks forward to integrating blacksmithing and wood-working into the Farmer Training Program. Tom also has a MS in Soil Science and makes sure we are taking good care of our soils! Tom will give regular workshops throughout the season.

Christie Shell, Assistant Director, has been involved with Calypso since 2001. Christie is a skilled farmer and has been involved in all aspects of the organization from educational programming to strategic planning and managing Calypso’s CSA. Christie loves the fast-paced growing season and is excellent at keeping farm production on track and fun! Christie will work side-by-side with participants through the growing season.
Sonya Montenegro will be Calypso’s first Artist in Residence during the 2013 season. Sonya participated in the Farmer Training Program in 2012 and has decided to return in a new capacity. Sonya is a skilled artist and abounds with creativity and a passion for farming life. During the 2013 season she will be working on an illustrated guidebook to Ecological Agriculture. Sonya will lead the art and craft workshop series throughout the program.

Who are Calypso’s Training Program Participants?
Participants are individuals who are seriously focused on advancing their personal education in small scale, ecological agriculture and are interested in doing so in a dynamic, creative and community-based setting. Some are focused on getting their own farm off the ground as soon as possible, others are exploring the farming lifestyle, still others are drawn to farm-based environmental education and would like to build their farming skills while also being involved in environmental education. All are fully integrated into the farm system and play an integral role on the farm crew.

The dynamic nature of Calypso Farm requires that participants be very self-motivated, flexible, and able to work (and live) well with others. A good sense of humor is also helpful!

Program Participants:
- Make a personal commitment to be a positive, active member of the Farming Team
- Participate in all aspects of the Farmer Training Program
- Maintain open and positive communication with all members of the Farming Team and Calypso staff members
- Participate in regular training and discussion sessions
- Contribute $1,500 for the season to cover a portion of the program cost

What to expect
Adjusting to the dynamic, seasonal pace of the farm stands alone as the most challenging factor for most participants. Alaskan summers are full of light, energy, and fun, but can also be overwhelming at times. You will arrive right at the fast-paced beginning of the growing season. When you arrive, part of your orientation will include exploring the surrounding forest to harvest birch bark and spruce root for making knife and tool sheaths for your personal tool belt. Similar projects will continue through the season. As the fields thaw and drain in the spring (early May), we make a big push to get the beds prepped and plants moved out to the field. This is usually the most physically demanding time of the season. We do the vast majority of the field work by hand. During May and early June, we often work through the day and after a dinner break, return to the fields for planting. Our terraced, hillside farm setting provides amazing views of the Alaska Range but also requires substantial hill walking.

Once the fields are planted and first harvesting begins, the work week settles into more of a regular rhythm of harvest, cultivation, and field maintenance. At this time, we’ll begin the weekly “Create your own Farm” project and this is also a great time to make sure the program is tailored to your specific needs and interests. Throughout this season, you’ll have the opportunity to take on increasing responsibilities and explore all that the farm and the Farmer Training Program has to offer.

Although we strive to have several more relaxed days of the week (weekends), there is always some level of activity on the farm and there will be many weekend activities that you want to be a part of, so plan to truly immerse yourself for this 5 month period!
Living on the Farm

Housing - On-farm housing is rustic. Participants will each have either a large, bug-free tent on a raised wooden platform, an 8’ x 10’ seasonal cabin for sleeping or a very small shared cabin. A communal kitchen space is available for meals. The farm does not have running water. Clean drinking water is available at all times and a wood-fired sauna is available for bathing. Out-house facilities are available on-site.

Food - Calypso will provide basic food staples (grains, rice, beans, oil, spices, etc) in addition to vegetables grown on the farm. Monday through Friday, we eat lunch together – rotating cooking chores with those interested in cooking for the group. Rest assured – you will eat well!

Transportation – Although a vehicle is not required, the farm is located 10 miles from Fairbanks and public transportation is not available in our area. Bringing some mode of transportation, car, bike, scooter, etc. is highly recommended. There are not any vehicles available for lending on the farm. If you are interested in making the drive – we are happy to offer advice and direct you towards maps and resources.

Come prepared! - Although summers on the farm are often quite warm and sunny, we have been known to have some chilly, wet weather. Come prepared with a very warm sleeping bag and other comfortable bedding, layers of warm clothing, rain gear, rain boots and warm and dry outer layers. We will provide you with a detailed “What to Bring” list!

We hope you’ll be interested in immersing yourself in an Alaskan farming season as a stepping stone to launching your own farm! We’re excited to hear from you!

To Apply:
Please email or mail the information listed below to calypsosusan@gmail.com or by US Mail to: Calypso Farm and Ecology Center, PO Box 106, Ester, AK 99725. Please put the “Application – Farmer Training Program” in the subject heading or on the envelope. We will fill the spaces available on a rolling basis, so apply early!

Include the following in your application:

1) A current resume (does not need to be formal)
2) Three strong references – with current contact info for each (email and phone)
3) Answers to the following five questions (these are important!...):

Why are you interested in participating in the Farmer Training Program at Calypso? 
Describe any relevant experience that will aid you as a program participant. 
If you were a vegetable, what would you be and why? 
Describe the role that farming plays in your future plans. 
Describe any experience that you’ve had with non-traditional forms of education. 
What do you hope to gain from spending a season at Calypso?

We welcome and encourage questions about the program! To learn more, please contact Susan at (907) 451-0691. We encourage phone calls and are happy to receive email questions as well. Send email inquiries to calypso-susan@gmail.com with “Farmer Training Program Questions” in the subject heading.