

In 2010, Brandow volunteered at Afton Field Farm — learning how to raise and butcher fowl from Tyler Jones, who interned at Salatin's Polyface Farm, and how a good processing facility is set up. Brandow says it felt good to be part of a holistic process, working with good people and creating healthy, appetizing food. Always aware of the ultimate sacrifice farmers ask of their flocks, Brandow says he took time each butcher day, almost ritualistically, to thank the birds for sustenance they would soon provide for people. At the same time, he started Our Family Farm on rented pastureland, growing 400 birds that friends and family members eagerly snapped up.

Encouraged by his early success, Brandow built more mobile cages and raised more than 3,500 birds in 2011. His customer base grew to include local restaurants, such as Holy Cow, Nib, Belly and Marché, as well as Long's Meat Market and Capella Market. Firmly entrenched in the local cuisine scene, Brandow has turned his efforts towards building a direct customer base via a 300-strong email list, a blog and a Facebook page. "It seems like everyone wants to hear what's going on," he says. "Restaurants are our bread and butter now. But we want to get our birds into people's homes directly." Our Family Farm's CSA has grown from a single subscriber in 2011 to seven this year and sells fryers to another 30 customers regularly.

Farm-to-table philosophy

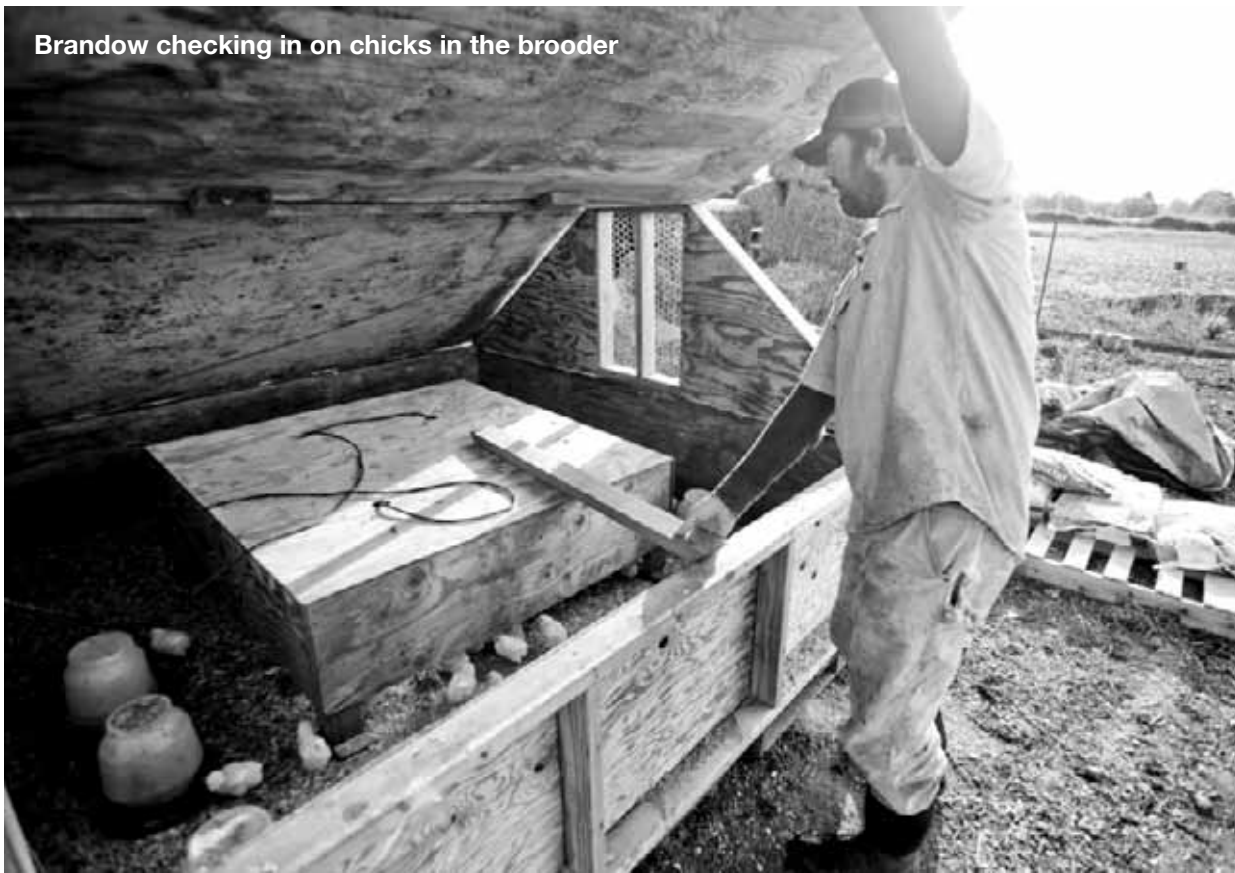
A later afternoon sun beats down on a creamy yellow house in north Eugene. Brandow sits in the shade of his covered porch with his wife Amanda, his 15-month-old daughter Addison squirming in his lap. It's pick-up day for Our Family Farm's CSA customers and time for some community building. As people show up, the Brandows chat with them, catching up with customers who are or are becoming friends. Sharing the farm's latest developments and the sustainable eating topic *du jour*, they learn, in turn, about those they feed. Brandow says the most fun part of his job is being able to connect with people on a regular basis around food, getting to know them and hearing their stories. He might talk to a customer for 10 minutes at pick-up time. "One of the things we love to do is share what we're doing in a way that inspires other people," he says, echoing a basic tenant of the farm-to-table movement. "My wife and I are all about a community of smart eaters."

Brandow says Our Family Farm operates with three guiding principles. The first is careful stewardship to heal the land, much of which in the Willamette Valley is affected by pesticides and other damages of conventional agriculture. "But, other side of coin, there is so much available here," he says. "People don't realize the bounty." This leads to the second principle: to raise some of the best food in the valley. Our Family Farm intends to expand beyond the chickens and turkeys it now raises and introduce cows, sheep or other grazing animals to its fields, fully utilizing a Salatin-esque pasturing technique to satisfy local demand for sustainably produced meat. Brandow's final and overriding goal is to contribute to a growing community of people making sustainable food choices, through his own farming, by supporting other small farmers through his family's own purchasing power and by outreach.

"I think he definitely seems committed to the movement for slow and local food," says Bill Bezuk of Eugene Backyard Farmer, a vocal proponent of urban homesteading and local sustainable food production. Bezuk and Brandow have been discussing the possibility of holding chicken butchering demonstrations for urban homesteaders with unwanted roosters or non-productive laying hens. The process can be intimidating to the uninitiated, Bezuk says, and a demonstration could provide customers with the confidence and empowerment to process their own birds if they choose.

The pinnacle of Brandow's outreach happens each butcher day. A volunteer work crew of about a dozen people assembles to harvest the birds many will soon eat. "It's a collection of customers, friends and people who are interested in good food and the process," Brandow says. The crew consists of friends, family members and, perhaps most importantly, Brandow's customers putting farm-to-table philosophy in action: informed consumers taking an

Brandow checking in on chicks in the brooder



Pullets inside the Salatin-inspired chicken tractor



Brandow prepares to cut the arteries of his locally raised chickens before they are processed in the MPPU