



From Farm to Table at Patagonian BaseCamp:

Until you've been there, it's difficult to appreciate the rugged remoteness of Marcel and Carolina Sijnesael's slice of heaven at Patagonian BaseCamp. Marcel searched all across South America to find the region that he deemed the heart of the best fishing in the world. Yet this place he discovered was (and remains) a great distance removed from the conveniences of the modern world. The closest "grocery store," for example, is a five hour drive from the lodge!

Fortunately, Marcel's passion for angling is well paired with Carolina's passion for animals and green thumb. While Marcel built the finest fishing program in Chile, Caro built the finest sustainable farm in the region. Their lovely daughters, Elena and Isabel, have grown up on the farm, chasing animals and picking eggs. Today, nearly all of the food served at Patagonian BaseCamp is grown or raised right there.

At any given time, the farm has about 50 sheep/lambs, 200 chickens, 30 turkeys, 3 female pigs (resulting in about 25 piglets per season), and 4 calves (beef for the season). They also hunt or barter for meat from their neighbors, so guests frequently enjoy fresh wild hare and venison (red stag). They even fish for spring chinook salmon throughout the season. The dairy products are also local, either raised there or on neighboring farms. They even smoke their own meats and fish, and make a delicacy called *gravado lachs*.





And it's not just the meat that's home grown. Their extensive gardens provide organic vegetables including lettuce, spinach, kale, snap peas, green beans, pumpkins, zucchini, tomatoes, peppers, bell peppers, cucumbers, potatoes, and beets; and fresh fruit including apples, strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, plums, and cherries, which are used for fresh table fruit as well as juices, marmalades, sauces, and dressings. Even their herbs come from the farm: mint, fennel, cilantro, and parsley.



One of our favorite stories from the farm is recounted by Marcel below:

In the spring of 2013, almost every night we lost a newly born lamb. Only lambs of less than 1 week old. Sometimes we found the body, mostly intact, while other times most or all of the lamb had been eaten. It was a complete mystery what animal (or animals) were the culprits. We decided to place a trap in a small hole in the stable and used a dead quail as bait. The next day, we found a dead lamb in the trap. Obviously some animal had dug the lamb out of the stable through the hole, passing through the trap until it closed on the poor lamb. No predator found, the mystery continued. Carolina decided to drive 5 hours to Coyhaique where the government had a breeding project on sheep dogs. The goal of the government was to help farmers in protecting their sheep and to avoid illegal killing of pumas by the sheep farmers. Caro bought a young trained Great Pyrenees. The drive back to Base Camp with the dog in the back of the closed pick-up truck was an adventure alone. After about 4 hours Caro pulled over to check on the dog again, only to discover it was gone. Impossible. It is a big dog and the sliding window of the truck was not open more than a few inches. Still, the dog was gone. There was no way to find the dog in the thick forest of Patagonia that lines the Carretera Austral, and moreover she had no idea where the dog had decided to leave her. With a horrible and desperate feeling she returned to Base Camp. All she could think of was to pass by the police station in Puyuhapi and tell them, without hopes, what happened. She came back home crying.

Two days later the police called. Someone found the dog and brought it to the police. Caro was the happiest woman in the world and drove off at full speed to pick him up. Anyone who has driven with Caro knows how fast that is! Since then, the dog (named San Miguel), is part of our farm and truly in those 4 years since he's been with us we have never lost another lamb again. But the mystery is still alive: we may never know who or what side killed and ate those lambs.

