

# THE carrot PROJECT



## CLIENT UPDATE

### LITTLE DIPPER FARM

#### FARM DETAILS

##### Little Dipper Farm Brooklyn, CT

Lori & Venus Corriveau  
1:1 Advising Participants  
2023

#### FARM SNAPSHOT

Little Dipper Farm is a 588-acre mixed-use property in Brooklyn, CT, including woods, pastures, farmland, and a large barn containing a restaurant and retail space. Lori and Venus Corriveau bought the farm from a family in 2021 and were recently approved for 50 glamping sites. Members pay for access to the grounds and amenities.

#### INNOVATION

Lori and Venus have leveraged a lifelong love of growing community to create a farm-based venue for bringing people together to share everything their farm property has to offer. They are collaborating with other professionals to build a series of businesses revolving around the farm, including farm dinners, live music, hiking, and glamping.

## FARM HISTORY

Looking for a big change for their family after weathering the pandemic together in Boston, Lori and Venus Corriveau bought Little Dipper Farm in 2021. “Having community in our lives was critically important—we were desperate for a change during the Covid years, so we held hands and jumped!” says Lori. With a driving vision to: “bring people together again after so much isolation,” the two set out to open Little Dipper Farm and its vast acreage to the surrounding community. Venus and Lori had a shared history of making lifelong friends at music festivals around the world, and they longed to provide a venue where such connections and relationships could develop—a place to grow community.

Little Dipper Farm, in Brooklyn, CT, is an hour and a half from Lori and Venus’s home and spans 588 acres, including 90 acres of hayfields, 4 acres of cropland, 10 acres of pasture, a barn that houses a restaurant and a farm store, and a 1740s farmhouse. At the time of purchase, the vegetable fields had been dormant for four years and the restaurant had been empty since 2018.

A first priority for Lori and Venus was to breathe life back into the property and to assess the best ways to bring visitors in. They began considering the right “cocktail” of income-generating activities to improve and maintain the acreage and buildings, relying on their formidable skills in

small business management and community building to bring their vision to reality. Lori had owned a socially responsible financial planning firm for six years and had operated several Ben and Jerry’s franchises. Venus directs an afterschool program for grades K through 8 and has taught nature-based programming to children and adults throughout her career.

The pair envisioned the vegetable fields as the heart of their whole operation, providing food to the other enterprises on the property. Lacking in-depth farming experience, they hired an experienced grower whom they met through music festival friends.

## OVERVIEW OF OUTCOMES: UNITING MANY HANDS, BLANCING MANY POSSIBILITIES

“We meet people everywhere—that’s the joy of our lives.”

– Lori Corriveau, Co-owner, Little Dipper Farm

In line with their value of community, Lori and Venus have built their business with a collaborative agenda, partnering with like-minded professionals. While tackling the more complex project of launching the farm enterprise, they immediately leased several areas of the property to specialists who got up and running right away—a beekeeper who gives talks and raises honey for sale in the farm store, a forager who leads weekly walks, and a local restaurateur who started a series of farm dinners. A local farmer hays the fields and grazes the pastures. In addition, Lori and Venus created a series of festivals with vendors, live music, and food.

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*We know a lot of people with a lot of great ideas.*

Lori and Venus worked with The Carrot Project early in the process of purchasing their property, and after their first two seasons of rapid growth, they circled back for help sorting out which income streams to prioritize. Lori says: “Little Dipper Farm has so many possible avenues of income and activities; it was hard to know which to pursue.” With their Carrot Project advisor, they created a financial tracking system that captured both the “sprawling nature” of their operation as well as “the nitty gritty” of inflows and outflows for the farm, itself. “We established classes to track each enterprise, so we can see what is actually income-generating.” They then ran comparative scenarios to evaluate the right mix of concurrent enterprises.

Lori and Venus had hoped that the farm’s vegetable production would generate around 20% of the total operating budget for the property. However, running the numbers confirmed Lori and Venus’s gut feeling that they’d fallen short of this goal — “we just weren’t monetizing the farm’s production effectively.”

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*There’s no business like farm business.*

“It turns out you can’t farm a farm out to someone else the way you can other enterprises—every farm has its own story to tell, and the farmer has to sit and listen.” Lori emphasized: “it was difficult not fully grasping all of the intricate complexities of growing and selling vegetables,” but she and Venus are ready to roll up their sleeves, grounding themselves literally and figuratively on the land to understand this key component of their property. They’ll live on site with their two youngest children this summer while they grow on a smaller portion of the field. Moving forward, they plan to expand production to supply the farm dinners and glamping enterprise with produce, as well as stock the farm store.

Lori says: “it has been good to learn that we’re both able to pivot when we realize something’s going in the wrong direction.”



## ON THE HORIZON

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*“We had a giant wake-up call and feel really good about our learning curve. People are in love with the property and the feeling of being there. Eventually, it’s going to work!”*

Lori and Venus are optimistic and determined to bring their vision to fruition despite the hard road ahead. Their short-list of primary income-generators includes leasing out the restaurant to get it up and running full time; preparing the property to offer as a wedding venue; and building out the glamping enterprise—the pair recently got approval from the town of Brooklyn to permit 50 glamping sites. They’ll start by building 35 small cabins, which they’ll manage with an experienced hospitality group. All of these enterprises will work together and enhance each other—for example, visitors renting a glamping site will stay on the property long enough to eat from the restaurant multiple times.

In addition, Lori and Venus will work on expanding the offerings of their small farm store to include more and more products from their farm, like honey, flowers, eggs, and mushrooms. They hosted a winter farmers’ market in 2023 that was very successful, and they’d like to ready the barn to host a series of markets in the future.

Lori and Venus remain focused on the original impetus for buying the property: community-building. Lori reflects that “We get a lot of energy from bringing people together to enjoy nature, art, music...there is so much joy in bringing it all to Little Dipper Farm—all those beautiful ways in which you bring in food from the fields and enjoy these experiences.”

After their oldest child graduates from high school next year, Lori and Venus plan to move full time to the farm.

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*“We want to be there—we want our youngest children to grow up there—we want this to be our lives. When we’re there—there’s nothing better*

