



Faraway Farm's Alpacas on The Martha Stewart Show

By Leda Blumberg

When we received a phone call from The Martha Stewart Show, we knew we'd have an interesting time ahead. They'd heard about our alpaca farm from the editor of a magazine that I write for and they wanted to know more.

After a lengthy phone interview, two of Martha's producers visited our farm in Yorktown Heights, New York. My husband, Steve Cole, and I enjoyed showing them around the farm, introducing them to our alpacas and horses. We brought treats out to the fields and our visitors enjoyed getting their hands on our friendly herd. After learning about the history, use, care and breeding of alpacas, they scheduled filming dates for the following spring. The filming was planned for two separate days,

so they could have scenes from a normal day on the farm, and then return for shearing day.

Martha wanted to show all the stages of making an alpaca garment, from shearing to finished product, so I called fiber artist extraordinaire, Faith Perkins of Quarry Ridge Alpacas in Salem, New York. Faith has been knitting since she was a schoolgirl, and I knew she would be the perfect person to demonstrate fiber arts. We chose to feature fleece from Marimba, an incredibly soft maroon-colored alpaca that I had purchased from Faith in 2008.

The first day of filming was on a lovely April day. Although the trees weren't leafed out yet, the pastures were filled with lush green grass and the alpaca were in full-fleece fluffiness. The cameraman, a soundman, a film crew assistant, the field producer and her assistant scouted around the farm picking out optimal locations to shoot footage and to interview us about care, history and fiber usage. Faith joined us to demonstrate carding, spinning and the knitting of a cable scarf using Marimba's yarn, filmed inside our farm store.

A few days later, the crew came back for shearing. We had informed them that shearing is stressful for the alpacas, so they were careful to be as unobtrusive as possible. Early in the day, our young male, Zingaro, experiencing his first shearing, spat directly into the cameraman's new high-definition camera. After cleaning his camera (and himself), the cameraman moved to the side, out of spitting range.

When it was Marimba's turn, her pregnancy hormones were in high gear (yes, spit and scream). The soundman had never heard anything quite like that before. Definitely not his typical Mar-

ing and filming equipment that was brought into their pastures.

Shortly before our segment was due to air, we got an unexpected phone call late in the afternoon. Martha's studio producer asked if we could be there the next morning and oh, could we also bring some alpacas along? We said yes to a studio visit, no to bringing alpacas. We didn't want to stress our alpacas with crowded city sidewalks and elevator rides! With little time to prepare, we threw an assortment of farm store merchandise in boxes and headed to New York City the following morning.

Martha's studio is wonderful -- all the sets are gorgeous and her staff couldn't have been nicer. Martha chose to wear one of our alpaca sweater/wraps throughout her show. When it was my turn to be on camera, I showed Martha our homegrown yarns, garments, throws and

stuffed animals. Immediately after the segment aired, online orders for our merchandise started pouring in. We spent the next several weeks filling orders constantly, just taking breaks to care for our alpacas and horses. We've been receiving phone inquiries

from all over the country, and we refer people to AOBA and regional organizations like Empire Alpaca Association and MAPACA for information about farms in their areas.

The producers of The Martha Stewart Show did an extraordinary job of capturing the joy of raising alpacas. They gave us the opportunity to introduce alpacas to a wide audience and we hope that our fellow alpaca breeders benefit from this positive exposure.

The television segment originally aired on October 22, but it can be viewed anytime on our website: www.FarawayFarmAlpacas.com



tha Stewart experience! We decided to shear worldly Aphrodite next, knowing that she is calm and quiet. Using a bit of in-studio magic, the producers used the sound track from Aphrodite's shearing with the visuals of Marimba being shorn.

The rest of the filming was quite a bit calmer and the alpacas were on their best behavior as we moved them around into different fields for various scenes. Script development was collaboration between the producers, Faith, Steve and me. By the end of the second day of filming, the crew knew all the alpacas on a first name basis. Martha Stewart's staff is a team of dedicated professionals, serious about their work, but also a lot of fun to work with. They were very respectful of the animals' space, and the alpacas had fun checking out all the light-

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