

DANIEL ZAMORA, HERITAGE FARMS



Daniel Zamora has finally fulfilled his lifelong dream: to work his own land and grow his own food. He was born in Mexico

before his family moved to Salinas, California to find work. His older brothers had to work as fieldworkers with his parents to provide for the family, but he and his younger brothers were given the opportunity to go to school. Daniel was able to finish high school while he worked on the weekends with his parents in the fields. His parents were fieldworkers for 20 years and Daniel saw how many hours they worked and the sacrifices they had to make to support the family. Daniel knew that this was not what he wanted in life. He loved the farm life, but he did not want to be a strawberry picker. He is very grateful that he was given the opportunity to go to college to study Civil Engineering. During his time in college was when he heard about ALBA on the radio.

He knew right away that ALBA was a great opportunity for him to do something that he had always wanted to do: operate his own farm. **He wanted to expand upon the knowledge he already had gained from his father.** After getting his degree in Civil Engineering, Daniel went through the PEPA training program in 2007. Daniel now leases 4 acres from ALBA to grow crops for his business called Heritage Farms. He is most proud of his popular strawberries because he has worked hard to develop the right flavor and quality. He is also trying raspberries, squash, cucumbers and broccoli. Daniel's strawberries truly give him a sense of empowerment because he knows that if he had not been able to pursue his dreams he would be out in the fields, working long hours and picking strawberries for someone else. Instead he is growing his own.

Daniel makes a point to treat his workers with respect. He knows what it was like for his family as fieldworkers. He acts as more of a friend than a boss with his workers, using good communication, not over-working them and providing a weekly BBQ during the harvest season.

Even though farming is a lot of work during the summer season, Daniel says the slower pace in the winter gives him more time to spend with his family. He is able to be more involved with his children's recreational activities and to visit his relatives outside of Salinas during the slow months. When his children are not in school they love to come out to his farm and eat the fresh fruit.

Farming is fun for Daniel because he likes experimenting with the different ways to minimize costs and to find what fertilizers and irrigation strategies work best. He has done some experiments with crop rotations and ways to attract beneficial insects. Every year brings different weather and productivity so he must strategize and accommodate.

When asked why he grows organically he says that he learned about the environmental and health benefits of organic agriculture while he was in school and in the ALBA training program. He also knows that he can get a better market price for his produce if he is organically certified. When he started growing his own organic food he also realized how much better the quality and taste is. He takes pride in the fact that he can provide this food for his family knowing that it is safe. While it is hard to compete with the low conventional prices, Daniel knows the importance of finding the right markets and communities where there is strong demand for organic food.