



## **The Fabulous Beekman Boys**

**Dr. Brent Ridge**

**Josh Kilmer-Purcell**

### **Q & A**

#### **What are you hoping viewers of *The Fabulous Beekman Boys* will walk away with?**

The Fabulous Beekman Boys is about two urban men in a relationship who purchase a farm on a whim and rediscover what is really important in their lives. Viewers will walk away entertained and will see what it means to follow their dreams, understand what it takes to do that, and learn a little about farm life. We make farming sexy, fun and fabulous. The cameras captured the good and the bad, it's all part of the farm and it's all unpredictable.

#### **What was your initial inspiration for buying Beekman 1802? Had you always dreamed of owning your own farm?**

Our initial inspiration was the Beekman farm itself. We stumbled upon it completely by chance during a weekend getaway, and knew that we had to find a way to live there. We'd sort of half-heartedly been looking for a weekend home, but we never thought that it would ultimately become working farm. We were presented with an opportunity and one thing led to another. We were willing to take a risk and this became a whole new way of life. We are growing our own food, getting back into our community and back to what America was built on.

#### **Was Beekman 1802 a mutual dream? Or did it require some convincing on one's part?**

Brent and I don't agree on a lot of things, but we both knew the moment we saw it that The Beekman would be our home for the rest of our lives. We were at a transitional period in our lives and became accidental farmers.

#### **What is one thing that you've found since starting the farm that you feel would surprise most people about farm life?**

Although most people know that the food they eat is seasonal, I think people may not realize how fleeting most phases of the year are. Sometimes we only have tomatoes for one week before the frost hits. If we're away for a week, we might come back and find that our cherries have all ripened and already dropped to the ground. As a result, we really appreciate what the farm gives us when it gives it to us. And, no matter where you are, whether in Paris or on the farm, you always have the opportunity to step in crap.

#### **What surprised you after starting the farm, about farm life?**

Living the simple life isn't so simple. Whether you are a drag queen or a farmer- it's all about the footwear.

**How did Planet Green find you?**

We started our company Beekman 1802 nearly two years ago and Planet Green's President Laura Michalchyshyn was on our mailing list. She was reading our monthly newsletter about what's happening on the farm and she approached us about doing the show.

**How did the two of you meet?**

Through an online personal ad. Brent was too shy to accept my offer of a date so I tricked him into divulging his address, and then I told him that I "would be at a subway stop near his house at 7 o'clock the following night and he could either be there or not." He was.

**How long have you been together?**

Ten years in March 2010.

**You're known for having contrasting personalities; Type-A vs. more laid back – do you find that it strengthens the relationship to have that contrast?**

Depends on the day.

**What is the key to your success at being a couple along with business partners?**

We fight well. Seriously. We can scream our heads off at each other at one moment, and then turn around and discuss our dinner plans the next.

**What do you find to be the most difficult part of working together and being a couple, and the easiest?**

The most difficult part is that we're both very competitive. It's why we were both successful in our pursuits before we ever met. We have to be careful that when we're working on a project together we don't think one of us has to "win." The easiest part is just being friends. We happen to like each other.

**If you had one piece of advice to offer other couples, what would it be?**

We've always believed that a relationship is really the accumulation of shared history. So make history! The more things you do together, the more shared memories you have and the stronger the bond. If you do nothing but sit and watch TV together every night, you'll not only begin to bore yourself, you'll begin to bore each other.

**After taking in a small herd of goats from a local farmer, the herd grew to over 100 goats – how are they doing today?**

The Beekman herd is constantly growing and changing. Like all dairy farmers, Farmer John manages his herd always with the goal of having the greatest milk production. Each successive generation is bred to produce more than the last. Farmer John will often sell some of the previous generations to farmers who are just starting out and trying to grow their own herds.

**Talk about your relationship with Farmer John?**

We were lucky to find John or have John find us. He brought the 80 goats into our lives. John is a friend, an employee and a business partner all at once. His experience and knowledge has been invaluable. We also drive him crazy and he thinks Brent has turned the farm into a circus.

**Eco-friendly living is very important to both of you, what drew you to it?**

It just makes sense. Everyone thinks that eco-living must involve some sort of sacrifice, but in reality, being green is often cheaper and easier than the conventional alternative. The toughest part for most people we believe is breaking the habit of consumption. Not buying things that aren't necessary is probably the greenest thing that one can do.

**What drew you to organic products and producing them?**

We believe that if the earth can't make something itself, we don't want it in or on our bodies. That said, we will use medicine on our goats if they're uncomfortably sick or in danger of dying. We believe in a healthy balance rather than a dogmatic regimen.

**Tell us about Sharon Springs and your new community?**

The Sharon Springs, NY community has accepted us tremendously and our success depends on their success. We support the micro-economy, local merchants and farm to table movements. We support one another in the community and are giving Sharon Springs an opportunity to share as well.

**Dr. Brent Ridge specific:**

**You worked with Martha Stewart. Were there any skills that you learned through that experience which you apply to your farm and business life now?**

Martha is an entrepreneur and encourages entrepreneurship in her employees. When you have a good idea, she encourages you to explore it. The most important lesson I learned from her is the importance of paying attention to the details, because no one is going to care about your business as much as you do. This is my 3<sup>rd</sup> career incarnation, my first job out of school was Martha, she was a profound teacher and supporter and I took all she taught me to the farm.

**You developed the Healthy Center for Living at Mt. Sinai Hospital here in New York, are you still heavily involved with the Center?**

Yes, I am an active member of the board.

**Are you an overachiever?**

No, I think it is impossible to over-achieve.

**Brent, why do you see a need to wash your pigs or freshen the air in the barn?**

Why not. People see me as a perfectionist. Sometimes they ask me why do you care if things are a certain way. My response is, if you can take five extra minutes and make something a little bit better why not do it? *"Or you can have a beer by the pool,"* notes Josh.

**How do you balance all of your projects? How much time are you able to spend on the farm?**

I live at the farm full-time. I work about 18 hours a day and would not have it any other way. I may be very demanding, but one thing is certain: no one who works with me or for me will ever work harder than me.

**Do you have siblings? Are you close? Are you close with your parents?**

I have one sister who still lives in North Carolina as do the rest of my family. We are all as close as a family could be when separated by 1000 miles.

**Josh Kilmer-Purcell specific:**

**Where did you grow up?**

I was born in a town about 40 miles from The Beekman, but was raised mostly in Wisconsin.

**Do you have siblings? Are you close? Are you close with your parents?**

I have one older brother, who lives with his children near my parents in Wisconsin. We all live very different lives, but have always been very close. They're also very fond of Brent. Maybe more so than me sometimes! He's much more like them than I am.

**Your book *The Bucolic Plague* (Harper Collins, June 2010) is coming out soon. What was your inspiration behind it, and what are you hoping readers take away from it?**

I realized that there are thousands of books out there that tell stories of how people have given it all up, chased their dreams, and lived happily ever after. But in my own life, I've found that to be unrealistic. I wanted to tell the story about how much sacrifice and compromise is involved in doing what you love. I believe it's not healthy to trust that your dreams can be caught. They usually can't be. Or aren't what you thought they were going to be. But we can't give up. Instead, we have to learn to love the chase.

**You're an accomplished *New York Times* best-selling author; when did you get into writing? Have you always been passionate about writing?**

I began writing as an English Major in college at Michigan State University. I've always been passionate about any sort of creative activity, drawing, music, and writing. I've had issues with anxiety and depression since childhood and I've learned that the most successful way for me to overcome it is to make things, to create something.

**What was your 'aha' moment with your writing, where you realized your true talent?**

I'm still waiting for it. I'm just happy that people enjoy my work. The biggest reward for me is when a young person writes me to say that I made them feel a little less different in this world – that they are relieved to know that someone else sees the world like they do.

**Are you currently working on any memoirs or novels?**

I'm always working on something. And I usually wind up with something completely different than I anticipated.

**You are also an advertising executive, in addition to a contributor to *Out Magazine*, *NPR* and more- how do you balance it all?**

Brent and I have gotten very good at dividing up our different duties. We couldn't succeed without each other's help. But I have to admit I get very overwhelmed sometimes. Brent tends to be energized by stress and I just get exhausted and cranky.

**How much time are you able to spend on the farm?**

I'm at the farm every weekend. I view that time as almost sacred. It's a lot of work to keep such a historic farm and property thriving, but I feel it's such a worthwhile pursuit that I don't mind the magnitude of the chores.