



September 26, 2004 Sunday  
SPORTS FINAL EDITION

## **FIELD TRIP Fall's the ideal time to visit one of these nearby farms**

**BYLINE:** BY RACHEL WHARTON

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Living in the world's most famous big city, it's nice to get a taste of the country every now and again - and the fall is a prime time to do it. From hayrides and hot cider to pumpkin patches and apple picking, the months ahead offer up some of the best of the New York harvest season. Best of all, it's available at nearby farms, some just an hours' drive from here.

But if baling hay isn't your idea of fun, don't worry: Today's farmers are welcoming visitors in more ways than ever before.

From farm workshops to sleepovers, "Agritourism has grown extensively in New York State," says Jessica Chittenden, the daughter of a farmer and the spokesperson for the New York Department of Agriculture and Markets.

This autumn, you can taste grass-fed steak or learn how to make cheese; eat a picnic lunch on the edge of quiet Hudson Valley apple trees; dine on a three-course meal with a view of the artichokes you're eating, or even spend the night at an 18th-century farmhouse with its own private Long Island beach.

"In order for us to survive in agriculture, you have to look outside the box," says Monica Harbes, whose eight children (ages 11 to 25) help her and her husband, Ed, manage acres of farmland out on the North Fork of Long Island.

In addition to growing supersweet corn, apples and mums, the Harbes run a farm stand, host tours and live music and build two kid-friendly corn mazes every year.

"We love our farm," says Harbes, who spends much of the winter planning the harvest season. "We want to make it fun for everyone."

While your little ones have fun in the corn, Chittenden says, they also might learn something. The better tours, she says, offer visitors a chance to see where their food is coming from, to see where it's produced.

For many of us, it can be the first time we discover what it really takes to get the TV dinners to our tables.

"A lot of my customers from the greenmarkets come in the fall, and they get to see the farm and the drive I have to do every day to get to the market," says Fred Wilklow of Wilklow Orchards, near New Paltz.

Each weekend, hundreds of visitors stop at his valley farm to pick bushels of apples, buy freshly made doughnuts and jams and take a hayride or a hike up the hills of his property.

Like the Harbeses', it's a family operation - his wife, parents and children run every aspect of the business, which includes pressing cider, manning the packed stands and tending to the pigs, chickens and goats.

For Jan Greenberg, the author of "Hudson Valley Harvest," a guide to the farms, markets and foodstuffs of the region, meeting dedicated families like the Wilklows is one of the best parts of a farm visit.

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"They have a passion," says Greenberg, who splits her time between the farm country of Rhinebeck and the city. "Other than Wall Street, there is no other business where you have less control," she says, referring to the whims of Mother Nature. "Farmers are tremendously brave risktakers."

#### SIDEBAR: ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION

Want to see the farms but don't have a car? Not to worry - you've still got some options:

**TARRYTOWN TRAIN:** Take Metro-North and a taxi (\$7-\$9) to Stone Barns (see the listings below) for a day of farm tours and hiking at the old Rockefeller estate.

**A THREE-HOUR TOUR:** Farm lover and food writer Wendy Dubit offers chartered tours each fall through The Graduate Center at the City University of New York ([web.gc.cuny.edu](http://web.gc.cuny.edu)). On Oct. 3, she'll visit Outhouse Orchards and **Ryder Farms** in the Hudson Valley. Dubit also will help school groups, companies or other interested parties create their own farm trips. Call her at (212) 873-8158 to learn more.

**RENT-A-VAN:** The Hampton Jitney bus service offers charters for a range of group sizes to the region's farms and wineries. For details, visit [www.hamptonjitney.com](http://www.hamptonjitney.com) or call 1-800-936-0440.

**BIKE IT:** Both the Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North offer service within biking distance of hundreds of farms, and both allow bikes. Just be sure to get a permit in advance - and take a backpack for all the goodies you'll bring back.

#### SIDEBAR: HITTING THOSE COUNTRY ROADS

Happily, this is the season when the risks of farming pay off. And luckily for us, we're smack in the middle of some of the state's most productive farmland - much of it just an hour or so from midtown. From cheese making to pumpkin picking, here are a few nearby spots to experience this year's harvest:

##### Apple Pond Farm

80 Hahn Rd., Callicoon Center; (845) 482-4764, [www.applepondfarm.com](http://www.applepondfarm.com)

This Catskill horse farm and "alternative energy center" hosts overnight visitors and gives lessons in organic farming and spinning wool. They've got goats, lambs, apprenticeships and private parties.

##### Blooming Hill Farm

Route 208, Blooming Grove; (847) 782-7310, [www.bloominghillfarm.com](http://www.bloominghillfarm.com)

An organic farm known for the goods at its Union Square stand, Blooming Hill is open every weekend to visitors. It offers tours and cooking classes, and on the last Saturday of each month, you can arrange to stay for a field-fresh dinner.

##### Bobolink Farm

42 Meadow Burn Rd., Vernon, N.J.; (973) 764-4888, [www.cowsoutside.com](http://www.cowsoutside.com)

Just over the border in northern New Jersey, visit Bobolink to watch workers make the creamy cheeses and savory fresh breads they sell in the city. On weekends, pick up a few tricks from workshops and seminars, as well as a pound or two to take home.

##### Prospect Hill Orchards

40 Clark's Lane, Milton; (845) 795-2383, [www.prospecthillorchards.com](http://www.prospecthillorchards.com)

Steve and Judy Clarke are known for their apples and pears, and you can pick your own (plus pumpkins) from their orchards on a ridge high above the Hudson River. Their trees don't require ladders, and you can eat lunch by the pond, take a hayride or bring home a pie baked by daughter Pam.

##### Harbes Family Farm

Sound Ave., Mattituck, (631) 298-0800, and Route 25, Jamesport, (631) 722-8546, [www.harbesfamilyfarm.com](http://www.harbesfamilyfarm.com)

Along with their two beautiful farm stands, the Harbeses have hayrides, roasted corn, live jazz and tours. Stop by on Sundays for the special ones led by Stanley Sydlow-ski, a 78-year-old farmer whose family has been working on Long Island for generations.

##### Sprout Creek Farm

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34 Lauer Rd., Poughkeepsie; (845) 485-9885,

[www.sproutcreekfarm.org](http://www.sproutcreekfarm.org)

This idyllic farm (red barns and all) is run by nuns and offers a little bit of everything: award-winning cheeses, milking demonstrations, goats, pigs, chickens and bees, with the products of their work for sale in the market. They have educational programs for students and daily tours, or you can just wander the farm - but stop in to let them know you're there.

Stone Barns Center

630 Bedford Rd., Pocantico Hills, (914) 366-6200, [www.stonebarnscenter.org](http://www.stonebarnscenter.org)

Just a cab ride from the Tarrytown train station, this elegant complex on the former Rockefeller estate has garnered praise for Blue Hill, its gourmet restaurant. Much of what it serves comes from the amazing greenhouse, gardens and fields, which welcome visitors and will soon offer classes. Peek at pigs and chickens, hike nearby trails with a picnic or stop by the new cafe.

Wickham's Fruit Farm

Main Rd., Cutchogue; (631) 734-6441,

[www.wickhamsfruitfarm.com](http://www.wickhamsfruitfarm.com)

One of the oldest farms on Long Island, Wickham's has pick-your-own apples and grapes and a cheese cellar to help you pair them for a platter. On Saturdays, they give tours (call ahead) of the workings of the farm, and for a special treat, spend a weekend at Freddy's House, the restored 1798 cottage with access to 300 acres and the family's private beach.

Wilklow Orchards

341 Pancake Hollow Rd., Highland; (845) 691-2339,

[www.wilkloworchards.com](http://www.wilkloworchards.com).

You might have had a Wilklow apple at a city greenmarket, but now you can pick out your own. They'll give you a bag, a long picker and a map of their fields, with directions to at least 10 varieties. People stay all day, they say, often to eat a picnic lunch at the top of their hill. There are also antiques, games for the kids, cider, hot doughnuts and a hay-ride.

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**GRAPHIC:** AP PHOTO/STEWART CAIRNS WAY TO GOAT You can get a tour or just wander around idyllic Sprout Creek Farm. AP PHOTO/STEWART CAIRNS WATER VIEW Prospect Hill Orchards has all the pickin's. FRANK KOESTER AN EARFUL Kids are sure to find this Harbes Family Farm challenge a-maze-ing. FRANK KOESTER Relax Enjoy some country tunes at Harbes Family Farm.

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