

Halifax's Family Magazine

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our children

Fall 2012

Back to the *Farm!*

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is educational and fun for kids

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back to the farm

Learning where food comes from
is educational and fun for kids

By Lisa Card

Photography by RiverBreeze Farm & Cornmaze

Fall is the perfect time of year to get outside and enjoy some family fun at one of the many farms in Nova Scotia. Agritourism during fall in Nova Scotia is a bustling industry, and seeing firsthand how and where our food is produced can be both fun and educational for children. Many local farms have pumpkin U-picks, elaborate corn mazes, wagon rides, games, playground equipment, and petting zoos.

Taking the kids to the farm during the fall season is becoming increasingly popular with HRM families. Sackville mom Anitra Carr has been taking her children to Noggins Corner Farm and other Annapolis Valley area farms for the better part of a decade. "The first time I went I just got hooked. The kids liked it so much we go back at least once a year," she says. "My kids like the playground and the apple



Take a cow train ride through cornfields at a local farm.

picking." Carr feels that visiting the farm helps to dispel the modern-day disconnect between consumerism and the origins of food production that can often occur for children growing up in urban environments. "I think kids tend to think that everything shows up in the store and that's it. This shows them where it came from. I think through play it teaches them how a farm works and that there are still working people producing food for the stores and for us," she says.

The appeal for Mount Uniacke mom Andrea Weatherdon and her family is the time spent together outside in the country and away from the flurry of their daily routines. "The kids get

to spend time with us and we're not rushed," she says. "They get to sort of dictate the day because we let them get lost in the corn maze, and that is the best part [because] they get to make the rules." The slower pace and relaxing atmosphere keeps Weatherdon and her family coming back to farms like RiverBreeze in Truro year after year. "I really like to get out of the city and unwind," she says. "We try to show them life isn't always a hectic hustle and bustle. Personally, I think that the Valley and Truro and all those areas show them a better perspective on how life should be."

Janice Kirkbright is the museum director for the Cole Harbour Heritage Farm Museum. Kirkbright says the increasing demand for fall farm activities has prompted the museum to launch a Harvest Weekend Festival this year. Kirkbright pointed out that the majority of fall farm activities are occurring outside HRM and the museum saw a need for more activities in the local area. The Harvest Weekend will take place on October 13 and 14. Activities will include wagon rides, a cider press demonstration, garden tours, and sauerkraut and fall preserves tasting. There will also be traditional games organized for the kids such as sack races, horseshoes, sawhorse lassoing, and stilt walking. The farm also hosts a Harvest Dinner on Thanksgiving weekend.



RiverBreeze Farm and Cornmaze in Onslow offers all sorts of family-friendly activities, including playgrounds, a pumpkin patch and pig races.

Agritourism not only provides families with fun and educational fall activities, but also is breathing new life into farms that were hit hard by falling beef markets in the mid-1990s. It's doubtful that 200 years ago Jim Lorraine's ancestors could have predicted that the majority of profits from the family's beef farm would someday be derived from agritourism. However, that's exactly what turned things around for RiverBreeze Farm. By turning their focus



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Work your way through a giant corn maze this fall.

toward agritourism the Lorraines not only made their farm financially viable once again, but also became a major contributor to the local economy.

Jim Lorraine and his wife, Tricia, began to shift the farm's activities toward agritourism with a two-hectare strawberry U-pick after a difficult couple of seasons. "We were in a position then that you either figure out what you are going to do with the property and do it differently than what our family had always done or we wouldn't be here any longer,"

says Lorraine. From there they moved into opening a farm market, producing sweet corn and the corn maze. The corn maze has turned out to be one of the most profitable undertakings for the farm, and draws 35,000 visitors each year. During the day the corn maze, pumpkin U-pick, and farm-themed playground are geared toward families. In the evening the farm hosts an ever expanding haunted corn maze that is aimed at older kids, teens, and adults. The farm also hosts school tours in the fall where the children

visit the pumpkin patches, the observation hives, and the cornfields. During the tours Jim teaches the kids how the corn crop is grown and how the farm operates. "It's just a way for them to get out and see how farming is done—because how would you know anything about agriculture unless you visit a working farm," he says. "That's what we try to provide."

The decision to move toward agritourism has been very gratifying for Jim and Tricia Lorraine. The farm is the biggest attraction in the community during the fall, and the surge of people has impacted other local businesses and the local

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A daytime trip through a corn maze is great for the little ones. Older kids, teens and adults can tour the maze at night, if they dare.

economy in a positive way. Creating a fun experience for families has also been very rewarding for the couple. "It's a big deal to be able to entertain people," Lorraine says. "It's a unique kind of thing for a farmer to do, but when you get it right and when you have what we consider is a winning formula, it sure is satisfying." ■

Feedback

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OurChildrenMagazine

NEW BOOKS

FALL 2012

nimbus.ca

Baby Look

Shanda LaRocca Jones
Carol McDonald

978155109937 | \$8.95

TOES in my NOSE

Sherree Fitch
Illustrations by Sydney Smith

9781551099392 | \$19.95

TIME FLIES

WHEN YOU'RE CHANGING GEAR

DAVID ALMOND

9781551099293 | \$12.95

Apples and Butterflies

9781551099354 | \$19.95

Top five farms to visit during the fall:

1.

RiverBreeze Farm

www.riverbreeze.info

Located in Onslow, near Truro. The farm features strawberry and raspberry U-pick, day and night-time corn maze activities, a farm-themed playground, bouncy pillow, and a farm animal petting zoo.

2.

Noggins Corner Farm

www.nogginsfarm.ca

Located in Greenwich. The farm features a barnyard adventure area for play, food kiosk serving hot buttered corn, and a farm market selling fresh produce. From October 1 to 25 you can also check out the famous Kentville pumpkin people.

3.

Cole Harbour Heritage Farm Museum

colearbourfarmmuseum.ca

Located in Cole Harbour. The farm features a tearoom, gift shop, museum, barnyard animals, and gardens. The farm hosts different fun events throughout the year.

4.

Ross Farm

museum.gov.ns.ca/rfm

Located in New Ross. The farm is a working historical farm with costumed interpreters. Farm tasks are demonstrated to visitors as they were done 150 years ago. The farm also hosts many events and special activities though the year. In the spring people are invited to plant their own pumpkins and in the fall they come back to harvest them for Halloween.

5.

Willowbank Farm and U-Pick

www.willowbankupick.com

Located in Port Williams. The farm is open from September until the end of October and features a U-pick, farm market, petting zoo, school tours, museum, dykeview walk, picnic area, corn maze, and pony and wagon rides.

Also check out:

A government site lists farms in Nova Scotia that participate in agritourism and host events and/or U-picks for the public.

www.gov.ns.ca/agri/marketing/contact/landsea/