

Market Connection



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Tulleys Farm: Outstanding Farm Market of the Year

Tulleys Farm, of Crawley, West Sussex, England, was named Outstanding Farm Market of the Year in February at the 2004 North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Conference held in Sacramento, Calif.

Stuart Beare and his family have been NAFDMA members for about 8 years. They have looked to their colleagues in the United States and Canada for the latest techniques in combining agriculture and tourism to get visitors to the farm.

Beare credits NAFDMA conferences with helping position his farm at the leading wave of farm direct marketing in the United Kingdom.

"Being a part of NAFDMA has not only helped Tulleys Farm to look to the future, it is also having a dramatic effect on the entire U.K. direct marketing industry," Beare says.

Beare is a third-generation family farmer. Tulleys Farm was founded in 1937 as a dairy farm and quickly became a market garden to supply the army with fresh produce at the outbreak of the war. They soon developed contracts with top pickling firms in the United Kingdom and supplied them with beetroot and red cabbage. They also grew mint, parsley, and many salad and vegetable crops for the wholesale markets.

In 1972, the farm changed direction and began the pick-

your-own business. The family honed their marketing and retail skills during the following 20 years as they marketed 100 percent of the farm's 35 different crops entirely through pick-your-own.

The 1990s brought a new set of challenges, and the farm began looking for other ways to stay profitable. The family opened the Farm Shop in 1992 and the Farmhouse Kitchen Tea Room in 1996.

Back in 1994, the family couldn't have imaged that a little movie called *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (the U.K. title of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*) would a decade later spark a nationwide interest in the very American holiday called Halloween. In 1994, the farm grew pumpkins and began educating the public about the fun of Halloween. They took a cue from their U.S. colleagues and in 1995 started a Pumpkin Festival & Carving competition. After a visit to the NAFDMA conference in 1998, the farm began adding entertainment attractions for every season, including the Easter Eggstravaganza, the Strawberry Farm, the Giant Maize Maze, the Sunshine Flower Fields, the Spooktacular October Festival, and a Taste of Christmas Dinner. These events help attract 400,000 visitors to the farm every year. Today, Tulleys Farm is a leader in the U.K. farm di-



Tulleys Farm, Crawley, West Sussex, England, was named 2003 Outstanding Farm Market of the Year at the NAFDMA conference in February. From left: Joao Beda, Stuart Beare, and Paul Phillpot of Tulleys Farm; and Gareth Jones of the U.K. Farm Retail Association/National Association of Farmers' Markets.

rect marketing industry.

Each year, NAFDMA members nominate their peers for Outstanding Farm Marketer of the Year. The past three award winners judge the finalists. Judging criteria include:

1. Success as a result of farm direct marketing based on customer count/growth per year, average sales per customer and growth in annual income.

2. Willingness to share business-related ideas and information based on presentations at conferences, member networking and newsworthy articles.

3. Creative merchandising techniques, such as indoor and outdoor signage and dis-

plays, and news articles, press releases, newsletters, and brochures.

4. Creative and successful marketing ideas, their best or most unique product lines/value added tie-ins and new product uses.

5. Their farm identity, which sets them apart from competition.

6. Involvement with NAFDMA and other farm-related organizations.

In the May issue of this newsletter, read about the two finalists for Outstanding Farm Market of the Year, Fall Family Fun on the Farm, Hatton, N.D., and Harmon's Tree Farm, Gilbert, S.C.

2004 Board of Directors

Richard Tanner, President - IL / Midwest
309-493-5442 (w)
Richard@tannersochard.com

Kay Hollabaugh, Vice President - PA / Northeast
717-677-9494 (w)
kay@hollabaughbros.com

Mary Vollmer, Vice President - NC / Southeast
919-496-3076 (w), 919-496-3518 (h)
mary@vollmerfarm.com

Rob Leeds, Treasurer- OH
740-666-2020 (h), 740-833-2030 (w)
leeds2@agvax2.ag.ohio-state.edu

Brent Warner, Secretary - BC
250-356-1704 (w), 250-356-2949 (f)
brent.warner@gems8.gov.bc.ca

Wayne Bishop - CA / Southwest
530-633-2568 (w), 530-633-0625 (h)
wabishop@comcast.net

Robert R. Brown II - NY / Northeast
716-682-5569 (w), 716-682-5502 (f)
berryrch@eznet.net

Kerry Engel - AB / Canada West
780-349-4466 ext. 2 (w)
kerry.engel@gov.ab.ca

Jim Forsythe - ON / Canada East
905-887-1086 (w), 905-985-6749 (h)
j-l.forsythefamily@sympatico.ca

Randii MacNear - CA / Southwest
530-756-1695 (w)
rmacnear@wheel.dcn.davis.ca.us

Chalmers Mikell, - SC / Southeast
803-936-4288 (w), 803-936-4496 (f)
cmikell@safb.com

Vickie J. Parker-Clark - ID / Northwest
208-292-2522 (w), vickiepc@uidaho.edu

Debbie Pifer - OH / Midwest
330-533-4161 (w), 330-533-3937 (h)
dpifer3290@aol.com

Bonnie Remlinger - WA / Northwest
425-333-4135 (w), 425-333-4539 (h)
bonnie@remlingerfarms.com

Charlie Touchette, Executive Director
62 White Loaf Road
Southampton, MA 01073
413-529-0386 (w), 413-529-2471 fax
888-884-9270 (toll free)
nafdma@map.com

NAFDMA Office Staff 413-529-0386 (w)
Virginia Schwarzenbach,
Membership Director, WhiteLoaf@map.com
Kelly Fuerstenberg, Communications
Director and Newsletter Editor,
Kelly@WhiteLoafRidge.com
Marcia Touchette, Administrative Assistant,
Marcia@WhiteLoafRidge.com

A California recap

By Debbie Pifer
Canfield, OH



Sunny, warm, beautiful, green, overpopulated, left wing, sophisticated—these were my preconceived ideas of California. Having only visited the state once, I thought I knew what to expect. How wrong I was—and how right I was!

Our arrival in San Francisco confirmed my opinion of warm and sunny. However, on the first day of our bus tour—RAIN! Not just a little shower but a 10-year deluge. We farmers took it in stride, though. As we traveled throughout northern and central California, we learned that our industry is more alike than different. The farm businesses we visited were seasonal just like a lot of us. Many operations were small and family operated. The area of California where we toured did not feel overpopulated or cramped. Direct marketers faced the same challenges of attracting customers in the off-season, learning how to market value-added products, and dealing with zoning and regulations.

I was particularly impressed by a group of 16 pear growers (Apple Hill) who cooperated to form a marketing association more than 30 years ago. Twelve of these marketers are now into the second generation and have created a wonderful destination for many urban folks to visit apple, Christmas tree, and other working farms. My hat's off to them! How do you get that many farmers to agree on anything?

Our 10 tour buses rolled into Sacramento through gorgeous California scenery. Thanks to all who opened their farms to us in the mud and less-than-ideal conditions. Our bus drivers were at times directionally

challenged, but we managed to see diverse California agriculture. And then there were the bus songs from dinner on Day Two—10 buses, 10 songs, 425 people in one room—are we CRAZY?

Those of you who missed this year's conference missed a gem! The trade show was outstanding. Included this year were new ideas for most of us from the East—AGROArt—making sculptures using fresh produce! What a great idea. By all accounts, the workshops were informative. I must confess that after a long three days of buses, I skipped out to tour Old Sacramento—a preserved part of the Old West in downtown. It was shopping at its finest!

The conference held a wealth of ideas for me. From lots of good Web sites from Garrett Wasny to the lively and honest folks from Underwood Farm who showed us how to conduct business when wildfires are threatening your farm, I brought home ideas for tons of potential projects. Be sure to check out Patti Hathaway's presentation in your association yearbook. She taught us how to involve the others in our businesses in changes that we want to make from ideas gleaned at conference.

By far the best tourist stop was the post conference tour—a train ride through the Napa Valley. Charlie, you couldn't have scripted it better.

If you missed California, you did indeed miss green, warmth, and sun—and I'm only talking in part about the weather. The warmth of seeing old friends, the upbeat attitude of folks in our industry, and the potential to make more "green"—how can you afford to miss another conference? See you all in Boston in 2005!

It's time to renew!

If you've already renewed your membership to NAFDMA—Thank You! If you haven't yet renewed, hurry! This will be your last issue of *Market Connection*, and you will no longer have access to the Back Forty and other great NAFDMA benefits.

Adopt the NAFDMA bus tour concept to create a local sales force for your business

By Kerry Engel
Westlock, AB

One of the strengths of NAFDMA members is their ability to seek out successful business concepts and apply them back to their businesses. That's why we go on the bus tour and take part in the conference. Now I'd like you to think about the **TOUR itself**, not the tour stops. Can you repeat the tour concept with your local businesses and community leaders in order to generate word of mouth advertising and to create a local sales force?

This type of tour is what the tourism industry calls a **FAM Tour**. A FAM Tour (Familiarization Tour) is a tour designed to acquaint travel agents and travel media with specific destinations. Working with businesses in your area, you can build on this concept with other audiences.

FAM tour audiences can act as *ambassadors* for you, spreading word of mouth advertising to potential custom-

ers and acting as a champion for you when political issues surface. Your FAM tour audience could consist of:

- Event organizers
- Elected officials
- Your nearest fair/exhibition centre personnel
- Business community leaders
- Visitor information centre staff
- Tourism marketing organizations
- Provincial/State tourism representatives
- Local Tourism sector staff (lodging & attractions)

First impressions are paramount!

Depending on how many stops you incorporate into the tour, you probably won't have much time to tour your site. Create a **mini-experience** out of each stop. The more your *audience walks away* with in terms of a *memory*, the better your 'Word of Mouth' advertising will be.

1. Create an element of WOW!
2. Host a demonstration. It's been 4 years and I still remember the demonstration at Dugan Dairy in Arizona. Cow aspirins are huge!
3. Engage people in an activity. Remember the wagon ride through the Maple Trees in Ontario?
4. Sample product. How much wine did you buy in California this year?
5. Present folks with a tangible memory to



take home that acts as a visual reminder (photo, videos, CD Rom, art object, Christmas ornament). I have a Christmas ornament from Harmon's and a Saunders Farm postcard on my bulletin board!

6. Provide incentives for guests to recommend friends (eg. 15 percent off their next visit/purchase if they bring in new guests).

Farm direct/ag tourism operations in Alberta are using the FAM Tour to extend their *sales force*. What have they learned from the experience?

Start small, a small number of operations and a small tour group.

Start local, if you make mistakes at least you are still working with the home town group.

Take a practice run to time-out distances between stops and the time at each stop. Don't take this for granted. It always takes longer than expected.

Invite fellow farm direct/ag tourism operators to help promote each other and build packages or marketing clusters.

Have a tour with your chamber of commerce, town and municipal elected officers, it's a great advocacy tool.

Boost your profile and awareness. Generate ambassadors among local businesses, community leaders, and the tourism industry by replicating the NAFDMA bus tour in your area.

PS—You don't necessarily need to repeat the legendary NAFDMA bus tour song competition, unless of course you think you can recreate the winning formula of California's Bus #2.

Members' Choice Publications Contest results

Harris Seed sponsored the 2004 Members' Choice Publications Contest. More than 50 NAFDMA members submitted newsletters and/or bro-



chures for the competition. Members had some tough decisions to make and voted the following as their favorites.

Outstanding Newsletter

Fly Creek Cider Mill, Fly Creek, N.Y.

Outstanding Brochure

Underwood Family Farm, Somis, Calif.

Bill Michaels accepted the first place ribbon for Outstanding Newsletter on behalf of his wife, Brenda, who created the newsletter from scratch.



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More thoughts on selling at farmers' markets

Nina Planck
Founder, Local Foods

Note: This article is a continuation of the one that appeared in the January issue. It will continue in the May issue.

Quality is Everything

Ultimately, farmers' markets will not succeed simply because we are farmers and the folks down the road are not. They will succeed because the produce is superior to what consumers can buy elsewhere and the price is right. If your peaches are green or mealy, your corn is immature, your beans are tough, your meat is poorly packaged, your bread is stale, your lettuce is wilted, or your tomatoes are tasteless, customers won't come back. Taste your products. Do they measure up?

In a customer survey we've taken at a popular London farmers' market, **freshness** and **quality** were the top things customers volunteered in answer to the question: What's good about a farmers' market?

No other answer—not meeting the farmer, not saving family farms—came close. Customers did cite these (and other) considerations, such as organic foods. Value for money was also at the top. But freshness and quality were tops—and freshness is really a form of quality. Which means that quality and value for money are the main reasons people come to market.

We are lucky that farmers' market customers are discerning: that's why they shop at the farmers' market. But with regular exposure to fresh, seasonal, high-quality produce, they will become more discerning, not less. You cannot give them the

same old apples week after week, or uneven quality, or bad prices—and expect them to come back simply because you are a farmer. They will shop elsewhere.

Choose Good Varieties and Breeds

Supermarkets offer the same cosmetically perfect bland foods, from apples to bread to cheese. We need to offer something better, and different. The sweetest strawberries, hand-made bread, pastry with real butter, raw honey, fresh eggs, marbled, well-hung beef.

I don't believe there is a better-tasting strawberry than *Earliglow*. It is smaller than other commercial varieties, and its season is early, but we charge more for *Earliglows* than most farmers do for varieties I find sour and watery. If you grow a good variety or raise a good breed with some noticeable downside (*Earliglows* are small), don't hide it. Explain it.

For processed foods, use good ingredients and tell customers why your jam or cheese or bread is different—it's hand-made, cured properly, or not treated with chemicals.

Flavor is the most important quality in food. But there are other ways to distinguish your product from the supermarkets. It should be fresher because it hasn't traveled far. It should be exactly the right maturity and texture—something supermarkets often get wrong because of transportation needs (hard pears, mealy tomatoes). Rarity itself can be a virtue. Grow traditional and unusual varieties and breeds.

If your product has any good quality—plum toma-

toes makes thick sauce, a breed of beef is good on the grill because it's lean, a donut peach is easy to peel—say so.

Have Something to Sell All Season

This is especially critical for fruit and vegetable farmers. It's not worth coming to market only to sell asparagus for three weeks a year. To make a good return from markets, you need to have spring, summer, autumn, and winter crops. Extend the season with covers, by growing cold weather crops, or planting several batches of carrots for a steady supply of young carrots if they are popular. If you want to sell seriously at markets, you may need to change your growing patterns.

Sell a Variety of Products

A stand with one product (only sausages, potatoes, or juice) holds the attention of customers for only a moment: either they want the one thing you have to sell or they don't. Sell a variety: many different vegetables, even in small quantities, flavors of juice, cuts of meat. Customers will stay longer and spend more.

Bags

Place **bags everywhere within easy reach** of customers. Customers are blind when it comes to bags. This is a farmers' market mystery.

Work with the Manager

If you have a problem or suggestion, tell the manager. Are the market hours right? Do you have requests from customers for something no producer is supplying? Tell the manager about your

farm. The manager serves you and represents you to the public.

Cultivate Regular, Loyal Customers

We aim to build a base of customers who shop regularly at farmers' markets. We don't want 10,000 one-time-only purchases from the occasional passer-by. We want 100 people to shop 100 times at farmers markets. Or 1,000 people to make 10 purchases. We want people to come to market to spend \$10 to \$40, not \$2.50. That means people who are doing the weekly shopping at the farmers' market, often for a family, week in, week out. This usually means people who come for quality, not for rock-bottom prices.

You must remind customers that the market is open every week. Encourage them to bring friends, colleagues, family, and neighbors to the market. Tell them about other farmers' markets you attend.

Pile it High and Fill it Up

You must restock constantly. Consider carefully who takes money and who restocks at market. Some people are better at one job than the other.

The Smallest-Container Rule

The produce you have should always be in the smallest container in which it fits.

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You can reach Nina Planck at 212-982-6462 or via e-mail at planckn@earthlink.net

LOCAL FOODS is a non-profit dedicated to developing the market for local foods.

Pruning and Planning

What a change in weather coming home from California. No more sightseeing, meetings, international friends, and good California organic food. It is back to work in snow and cold to start the annual job of pruning 20 more acres of apple trees. This is a job where a person has time to do a lot of thinking and mental planning for the coming year, where the mind wanders to all kinds of subjects: what I should have said to the patrolman as he wrote a ticket, how to arrange time to visit my father in the nursing home, even about high school basketball: March Madness.

After California, Marilyn is trying to get me into shape; I keep telling her that round is a shape, isn't it? Anyway we started eating more squash and other good

healthy foods: squash is supposed to be good for preventing colon cancer and help in other ways. She started preparing some of the Ambercup squash, and we found how good they actually taste and how easy they are to prepare.

Part of the planning is that we want to do more sampling of the squash and really try to promote them. Increasing sampling will add another employee just to constantly prepare and maintain the samples for the customers. One of the things that we have learned is that **SAMPLING SELLS**. Also, Jane Eckert explains that this is another way to increase the average sale, which in turn increases the bottom line.

While I'm on the subject



of healthy eating, has anyone noticed the many articles in the newspapers, television, radio, and other publications about the diet of Americans?

I just read in the February 2004 newsletter of the U.S. Apple Association about health policy here and abroad. The article talks about the federal government revising its advice to Americans on health and wellness; the Food Guide Pyramid being revamped or replaced by USDA; the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children being reviewed because malnutrition is not the biggest problem but overweight and chronic diseases are becoming big issues now; and the World Health Organization will look at a global plan to

fight obesity and related diseases.

After seeing all of this information on overweight and related health problems, we need to look at ways to use this information in our markets and farmers' markets to promote the sale and consumption of more fruits and veggies. One way to do this would be for the markets to promote the 5-A-Day program. Knowing the creativity and ingenuity of NAFDMA members, I'm sure they can use this information and develop many ways to promote the consumption and sale of more fruits and veggies. Going back to a previous paragraph, we all know that increasing the average sale will increase our profits. One thing I understand is that NAFDMA members are not in this business for our health, but to make a healthy profit and living.

Lattin's claims first place in cider and jam contests

Lattin's Country Cider Mill and Farm, Olympia, Wash., didn't claim just one "best of" honor at the 2004 NAFDMA conference in Sacramento, Calif. Instead, the farm claimed the top prize in both the Golden Jug Cider Contest and the Crystal Jar Strawberry Jam Contest.

The cider was judged during two rounds. In round one, a panel of judges narrowed the cider entries down to the top six. The judges scored cider based on appearance and color; aroma and bouquet; acidity and sweetness; sugar/acid balance; body; flavor; finish; and overall quality. For round two, the judging was turned over to NAFDMA members and conference attendees, who ranked the cider and determined the winner. Bob



Tritten, a cider expert and experienced cider judge from Michigan State University, coached all judges on the fine art of cider judging.

During the second round, judges described Lattin's cider as having a good aroma, with good taste and no after flavor, very fruity taste and aroma, and having a good

flavor with a good sugar/acid balance.

NAFDMA members and conference attendees judged the strawberry jam entrants. They described Lattin's strawberry jam as very fresh tasting with a very strong strawberry flavor and a good consistency.

The Lattin family began making cider back in 1976. Today, farm founder Carolyn Lattin and her two daughters operate the farm and cider mill. The Lattins' attention to detail begins with selecting the freshest, highest quality fruits for their cider and jam and ends when the finished product is sold to a customer.

Golden Jug Cider Contest

1st Lattin's Country Cider Mill & Farm, Olympia,

Wash.

2nd Uncle John's Cider Mill, St. Johns, Mich.

3rd Boggios Orchard & Produce, Granville, Ill.

Honorable Mentions: Eagle Mills Cider Mill, Broadalbin, N.Y.; Cider Hill Farm, Amesbury, Mass.; Edwards Orchard, Poplar Grove, Ill.

Crystal Jar Strawberry Jam Contest

1st Lattin's Country Cider Mill & Farm, Olympia, Wash.

2nd The Jungle, Innisfail, Alberta

3rd Valley Home Farm, Wartrace, Tenn.

Honorable Mentions: VB Farms, Watsonville, Calif.; Gizdich Ranch, Watsonville, Calif.; and Kurtz Orchards, Niagara on the Lake, Ontario

Reality or Illusion, Façade or Function, Preservation or Evolution

Consumers don't interpret the term "direct marketing" in most business sectors with lots of warm and fuzzy feelings. It conjures up thoughts of telemarketing, door-to-door life insurance salesmen, junk e-mails and mailboxes plugged up with catalogues from stores you never even knew existed.

FARM direct marketing is something much different though, right?

Farm Direct Marketing was born out of a stretch for survival by family farms as the rules of economy changed in the post world war era. Prior to that era, the family farm was the prevailing food production center. Farm direct marketing today is reflective of the typical marketing and food distribution channels utilized at the turn of the 20th century. Direct sales to restaurants, farmers' markets, real foods from the farm served to our children in schools, roadside stands, and even direct sales to the corner market, are perhaps equally "retro" to modern day cultures as they are cutting edge new strategies. Funny how grass-fed beef, pastured poultry, and organic compost, are all the new rage. My dad brought me up believing they were the only options 70 years ago. Some might say, "What goes around comes around."

Entertainment agriculture was formed out of modern day farm direct marketing. During the pick-your-own movement of the late 1970s, many of us were quick to discover that lots of folks enjoyed the hayride to the orchard, the walk along the irrigation pond, and the (then out of bounds) animal barnyard to be more fun than

picking bushels of apples or lugs of strawberries. Pretty soon all the things that a farm kid took for granted could get packaged differently and sold as good, wholesome family fun. Things like packing down the hay, walking through a cornfield, loading pumpkins on the harvest wagon, and even feeding the animals have transcended from a 10-year-old farm boy's dreaded chores to a family farm's financial salvation. But it's all in the packaging, right?

Education agriculture streams into these rivers, too. The foundation of school tours on farms can be traced to two simultaneous beginnings. One originates at individual family farms. For just one example, farmers wanted to teach their community's preschool children that dairy farms don't always smell bad. They make good milk, too, and they keep the fields open, green, and beautiful.

School tours can also be traced to collective agricultural industries that have invested in demonstration farms and factory tours to educate children and adults about new ways of producing crops, livestock, and processed foods. In both cases, the tours were free for the children. The hosts were happy to spread the good word of education.

Even today, some still believe agricultural school tours should be free. They lend themselves to preserving our lifestyles. Some assert that it costs money to service them, and farmers ought to earn an income just like classroom



teachers do. It's all in the packaging, eh?

Tourism agriculture has now arrived. Is it the ocean into which all these streams and rivers will run? Or is it more

a delta of the times, creating an ever changing land mass that settles in waiting before flowing to another place decades into the future? For now, food production agriculture is still at the root of it all—well, on some agritourism farms anyhow. Funny how fiber doesn't even come in a close second anymore in agriculture, but we won't go there for now.

My favorite brief definition for agritourism is "Travel that combines agricultural or rural settings with products of agricultural operations—all within a tourism experience." This can take our farms and families far. Though no doubt, some of our own members will continue to redefine it. It's all in the packaging.

As a young boy, I was always fascinated with the study of the Native American civilization. Honestly, there was a time I had wished I lived it; the appreciation for... no, the dependency on, all things natural and living. But as a teenager, I was quick to see another side: a very short lifespan, and few defenses against rough weather, disease, and famine. As a young man (yes, still on the short side of 40 at this writing, thank you), I still pay attention and watch the ongoing evolution of the Native American society. The choices they have (or sometimes don't) of living on reservations, their on-

going efforts to educate the public of their history, the pow-wows and festivals, and yes, the financial reward and benefit of owning and operating more and more casinos. It's all in the packaging, right?

Like all of you on your farms and in your offices, I make a point to schedule a week or two each year to down-shift, lift my head out of the day-to-day workload, take a step back, and look at the evolution of what I do, too. I pay attention to where things are shifting in this business. I do that shortly after each year's annual convention, shortly after conversing with hundreds of you directly, listening to you enjoy one another's company, and spending lots of time studying the thousands of pages of evaluation forms you take careful time to fill out. Sometimes it's easy to find a sudden change of the year or some new common thread. Other times, things get shrouded from year to year, only to catch up after a three- or four-year trend before revealing a wake-up call.

The latter has been the case on the heels of our latest tours and conference in California.

There is a widening diversity among our own membership. Without question, we're still a unified group who believes in the virtues of farm direct marketing and the evolutionary steps the industry is going through. But it's interesting to assess the divergent beliefs of individuals regarding how a working production farm should present itself to the public, or even to its own peers. There is an

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Reality or Illusion, Preservation or Evolution

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escalating discussion among us on whether an agritourism farm ought to show the reality or the illusion of the public's romantic perception of farming.

Some of our tour stops this year provided that well-polished and groomed look (as best Mother Nature would allow), and others were void of any glitz and glamour whatsoever. Make no mistake that this is consistent with the rank and file of farms that open to the public across this continent every year.

It is also indicative of the inconsistency of today's public perception of what to expect when visiting a farm. That, in itself, fuels the debate on which approach to take in the vast spectrum of options for this industry. But, where five years ago our friendly debates were fairly limited to the business virtues of entertainment agriculture versus on-farm marketing,

now many of us are also increasingly judging each other on façade versus function.

In defense of those who think we should operate on working farms above all else, I must admit, my own family's 98 acres attracts lots of passers by to see the animals, the woods, and the falling down barns. But we don't welcome anyone getting out of their car to freely walk on our farm yet. In fact, upon my return home from a 20-some-odd-day tour of duty, my suburban-raised wife said to me, "The barn is beginning to smell really bad." I quipped back, "Well, then, it's a good thing we're not open to the public isn't it!" I, for one, have more tolerance for a smelly barn in the country than a cigarette butt-ridden sidewalk in a city or a poodle plop on a suburban sidewalk. Go figure.

Not to be saddled against many other members, I also need to support those who strive for freshly painted

amenities, smoothly placed block walkways, and no signs of animal feces thanks to a well-trained team of sweepers. I mean seriously, what does the public respond to in the big numbers!?

I would submit that the polished approach is far less the operator's desire to get away from the farm than it is the need to satisfy the public demand. There is also the added pride factor. In my line of work, I'm acutely aware of many gallons of paint and extra elbow grease being used when a NAFDMA tour comes to a host member's farm. Some of our past hosts hadn't planned on painting in the next several years for their thousands of customers, but they sure as heck were gonna paint and clean up before NAFDMA came to town. There's always an advantage to having company over.

So is it family farm preservation, or industry evolution? I'm not prepared to

draw any conclusions from my own commentary today. I'm in the luxurious position, as a columnist, of writing the thoughts down and walking away. Another day, as executive director and a meeting facilitator, I won't have that luxury. The fact is each of you will draw your own conclusions, based on your past life experiences and your own visions for the future. I will share, however, that it's inevitable these discussions will take place more formally in our not-so-distant future.

As our farm direct marketing industry expands, so too, it seems, does the need for terminology definitions, industry standards, and qualifying factors. Gone are the days when a NAFDMA membership meeting is concerned only with the inner workings of the association. On come the times of meaningful, group debate that will ring loudly through the industry.

Hang on!

Nita Gizdich is named to Hall of Fame

One of NAFDMA's founding members has been inducted into the association's Hall of Fame. That honor went to Nita Gizdich, of Gizdich Ranch in Watsonville, Calif., who

joined the NAFDMA Hall of Fame in February at the 2004 conference in Sacramento, Calif.

Gizdich was one of a small group of people who founded the association 19 years ago. At the time, the association was called the National Farmers' Direct Marketing Association. She was also one of the association's 12 founding board members.

Gizdich considers herself semi-retired, although she is still very much in-

involved with the farm. Gizdich Ranch began retailing back in 1965 with "Pik-Yor-Sef" berries.

Today the farm features the Eata Nita Pie Shop, a gift shop, antique shop, sales barn, juice room, apple shed, and farm park picnic area, plus more than 50 acres of apples and berries.

Gizdich also makes jams from her farm-grown berries. Her strawberry jam received an honorable mention in the 2004 Crystal Jar Strawberry Jam Contest.

Look for more about the conference in the May issue and on the Web site at www.nafdma.com.

Selling at farmers' markets

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If you start out with a crate of apples, keep it full throughout the whole market. If you have only half a crate left, find a smaller basket. By the end of market we often have one fennel bulb in a small basket, a few bell peppers in a quart box, squash in a gallon basket. Customers dislike buying the last of anything—it looks like the dregs. The smaller container looks like abundance.





**NORTH AMERICAN FARMERS' DIRECT
MARKETING ASSOCIATION**
62 Whiteloaf Rd.
Southampton, MA 01073

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 25-28, PEI

Atlantic Canadian Organic Regional Association's Atlantic Organic Conference & Trade Show, Howard Johnson Dutch Inn, Cornwall, P.E.I. **Charlie Touchette, NAFDMA's executive director, will speak on March 27.**

Call 902-632-2523, e-mail admin@acornorganic.org, or visit www.acornorganic.org.

March 27, Iowa

Iowa Farmers' Market Managers/Organizers Conference, Des Moines Botanical Center, Des Moines, Iowa.

Contact: Barbara Lovitt, 515-281-8232, barb.lovitt@idals.state.ia.us.

Oct. 18-20, Vermont

Northeast Sustainable Agriculture and Education Conference, Burlington, Vt.

Contact: Vern Grubinger, 802-257-7967, ext. 13, vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu.

Feb. 7-14, Massachusetts

North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association Conference & Trade Show, Park Plaza Hotel, Boston, Mass. Preregistration deadline is Jan. 6.

Visit the Web site at www.nafdma.com, e-mail info@nafdma.com, or call 413-529-0386.

**WELCOME TO NAFDMA'S
FRONT PORCH**



Who's chatting about what on the Front Porch?

* Jim is holding his first Strawberry Festival this spring and is looking for ideas in addition to his hayrides and cow train.

* Bill will also be holding his first Strawberry Festival. He's thinking about having a Father's Day brunch that features strawberry pancakes.

Do you have any ideas or experiences that you can share with Jim, Bill and others? Read their posts under Ag Tourism.

* Ken is looking for a mini straw baler.

* David is selling a Mark V Belshaw donut machine.

You can read Ken and David's posts under Classified Ads. You can also post your own items for sale here as well.

Logging on to the Back Forty is easy and informative! You just need your e-mail address and password. The password is generated automatically if you're a first-time visitor. Call the office at 888-884-9270 if you need help.

Also visit the conference pages, where you'll find:

- * Song lyrics from the pre-conference bus tour
- * Pictures from the conference, banquet and bus tour
- * A list of all award and contest winners.