

Outlook on Halton Hills

There's good picking found in Halton Hills

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is one in a series of articles compiled by the Halton Hills Tourism Committee, which are designed to inform people of what Halton Hills has to offer visitors.

There's something terrifically satisfying for the hurried urbanite about coming home from the countryside with a basket of strawberries or a bushel of apples you've just hand-picked.

It's certainly not just the low prices, although that's invariably a factor. Fresh from the farm and screened by your own quality control, 'pick-your-own' fruit and vegetables are among summer's tiny, perfect pleasures, and in Halton Hills, such pleasures abound.

Halton Hills, a town that surrounds its twin urban centres of Acton and Georgetown with rolling farmsteads and scenic woodlands, offers the full range of pick-your-own farms, both in the kinds of produce at hand and the size of the operations.

You can plan your outing as a quick visit to a lush field for a sampling of the latest berry crop, or as a full-day family excursion that includes an inexpensive, wholesome lunch, a romp in the hayloft for the kids, and such unexpected treats as

barbecued corn on the cob.

If you "Head for the Hills" - Halton Hills - the pick-your-own farms are all within a short distance of one another, each offering its own unique setting, often set well back from the road, secluded in a valley amid towering trees. Just being there is half the fun.

The popular season opener, strawberry time, is upon us, and thousands of people are eager to forget the bland flavour of winter produce by sinking their teeth into the first freshly plucked berry at places such as Greig's Pick Your Own Farm on 15 Sideroad just west of Trafalgar Road. Hundreds of urbanites flock here annually for the strawberries that ripen through June and the raspberries that follow in mid-July and linger into August.

Then it's time to fill your baskets with Greig's cucumbers, corn and Spanish onions, all grown in a 40-acre market garden.

This month's strawberries will be selling at Greig's for well below the \$1.69 average likely in supermarkets, but passing comments and surveys alike have demonstrated it's not the lower price that keeps consumers coming back to pick-your-own farms.

"The price really is secondary to

the freshness and quality," says Mabel Devolin, whose family runs the operation her father, Charles Greig, launched in the early 1960s.

Here, and at most pick-your-own farms, you can bring your own container to fill or buy one cheap from the owners. The container's weight is always taken into consideration when the bill is tallied.

Places like Greig's, Butt's Berry Farm, Orchalow Fruit Farms, The Country Apple Store, Quint Ferri's Place, Boonstra's Berries and the Carl Laidlaw Orchards may feature a swing set for the kids or some farm animals they can pet, but when it comes to pick-your-own farms that cater to the whole family, nothing beats Chudleigh's.

Chudleigh's Apple Farm on Highway 25 just north of Highway 401 boasts 72 acres of fruit-laden orchards, plus a large giftshop, restaurant, fresh baking, pony rides, mountains of straw that children can't resist and guided tours, all in a charming, welcoming rural setting. It's as much a family entertainment centre as it is a farm, and owner Tom Chudleigh's approach to driving agriculture has to be seen to be believed.

Armed with Chudleigh's bags, big enough to hold 20 pounds of fruit, visitors are first briefed on what's currently available then board tractor-drawn wagons for the ride to the picking site. Once their business

is finished (\$7.50 is the average price per bag, with more than a dozen varieties available), they can browse through the attractive shopping area, order lunch or just settle into one of the 700 apple pies baked fresh daily on the premises.

Apples grown early in a controlled atmosphere are available now at Chudleigh's, while the picking season begins in mid-August and

continues through October. Come the fall, there are also pumpkins, Oktoberfest sausage and sensational barbecued corn.

Whether scaling ladders to reach the rosiest apple or hunkering down in the berry patch, you'll return home from Halton Hills with the satisfied smile of the fledgling farmer, and what could be better than that?



In total, a cord

Lisa MacArthur of the 6th Pineview Guides smiles proudly as she is presented with her All Round Cord Certificate by Division Com-

missioner Diane Crawford, at a recent awards ceremony. (Photo submitted)

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