

# Fall farm stay features cider making, French food

By Bekah Wright

CORRESPONDENT

Arrive at Norfolk's Husky Meadows Farm, and you'll likely be greeted by their unofficial valet, a very vocal gray cat named Maxwell.

He won't help with luggage, but he will point out the direction of Seed & Spoon, the 300-acre farm's central hub for farm stays. Catch sight of the sweeping flower fields, and an urge to frolic among the blossoms with pollinator bees may come on. Especially if attending a special workshop involving a farm stay, cooking classes and food plucked straight from the garden.

During farm stays, guests interact with resident and local farmers, ranchers and beekeepers. "It's rare to have this kind of experience," Tracy Hayhurst, Husky Meadows culinary director, said. "How many people actually know farmers? Fewer than 2 percent of the nation's population are farmers."

Sometimes, this can mean harvesting side-by-side in the fields or hearing about life on the farm. This extends to the forest on the property. "Visitors aren't just visiting an organic farm; they're staying in an ecosystem," Hayhurst said. "The forest, wildlife habitat and pollination are all interconnected and influence what happens in our gardens." The takeaway for those on a farm stay? "While here, guests learn about the passion and stewardship behind a farming lifestyle," Hayhurst said.

Wanting to bring local dinners and cooking classes to the community, back in 2019, Husky Meadows undertook plans for a multipurpose kitchen and a country inn component, Seed & Spoon, was created.

Seed & Spoon encompasses four dedicated accommodations, including



Winter Caplanson/Courtesy of Husky Meadows Farm

**Above and in photos below, scenes from Husky Meadows Farm in Norfolk. People can visit the farm for programs including workshops, cooking classes and farm stays.**



Lisa Vollmer Photography/Courtesy of Husky Meadows Farm

an apartment above a garage, two suites in the main building and a standalone cabin, a former chicken coop transformed with luxe trappings and a portrait of a chicken in honor of the building's modest beginnings. Idyllically cozy (there are even mini Smeg refrigerators), the rooms call for kicking back with a good book or playing a board game.

There are no one-off weekend bookings to be had. Instead, the farm has stayed true to its original intent of teaching folks about organic food and cooking. So, bookings are

only available in conjunction with workshops.

Hayhurst oversees Seed & Spoon's programming and said most workshops take place over a weekend, with guests arriving on a Friday night to get acquainted with the property and meet over a welcome dinner at the farm's communal table. Saturday morning, there's breakfast — think scones, quiche, overnight oats, prosciutto egg cups and fresh fruit. Guests then head into the fields with a farmer to learn the ins and outs of organic production. After a lunch



Bekah Wright/For Hearst Connecticut Media

made with ingredients straight from the fields, there's time for exploring and hiking.

Saturday dinner begins as a cooking class. "In the past, we've done things like pasta workshops," Hayhurst said. "But the meal includes everything from soup to nuts — starters, soups, salads, a main course and dessert." All this gardening and cooking together form fast friendships. "People arrive on Friday night not knowing each other, then, by Saturday night, they're

talking up a storm." Workshops conclude with Sunday brunch. There's no rush to check out, with lingering encouraged.

There are myriad workshops in the works for this fall. The Orchard Farm Stay kicked off the fall workshops Sept. 22-24 with harvesting plums, pears and apples from the orchard under the tutelage of farm manager Brett Ellis, the former culinary gardener of Northern California's famed French Laundry restaurant.

Hayhurst then guided guests through transforming the harvest bounty into cider, doughnuts and pies and a hard cider tasting.

A Fall Art Intensive led by Marie-Collette Dupont-Nivet is scheduled for Oct. 12-14. The French artist specializes in using milk paints on wooden panels and furniture. Workshop participants will create wooden boxes using Dupont-Nivet's techniques for graining pigments, marbelizing, painting, glazing, varnishing and waxing. French fare is on the weekend's menu, with Sunday dinner inspired by Claude Monet's Giverny.

Oct. 20-22 is a Harvest Celebration, with a focus on cooking hearty dishes for the winter using the fall harvest from Husky Meadows. Sheer relaxation comes on when walking beneath fall foliage or sitting by the fire and enjoying a ditty played on the main gathering area's Carl Dudash-built harpsichord.

Husky Meadows wasn't always a certified organic farm. When David Low and his family purchased the former dairy farm in the 1990s, their pet huskies fell in love with the property, thus the meaning behind the farm's moniker. The Lows originally intended for the farm to be a summer getaway with a small garden plot.

Over the years, that plot has evolved into an organic community farm replete with greenhouses. A Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program soon joined the mix. When COVID hit, CSA subscriber numbers tripled. These days, Husky Meadows is no longer a farmers' market presence. Instead, folks are welcome to visit the property's farm stand (open May through October; Fridays and Saturdays) to purchase their choice of produce and prepared foods.