

*Don and Virginia Ranck host farm vacationers***Farming out rooms works well for the Rancks**

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Having vacationers come to their farm for a visit has been a good experience says Don and Virginia Ranck, a young couple who have continued Don's family's ten-year tradition of operating a dairy farm which welcomes tourists to lodge with them. The younger Rancks have been accommodating guests for the past five years. They both agree that it provides many opportunities for both the host and the guest families.

The Rancks started farming on Don's parents' farm one mile east of Strasburg five years ago. For the decade previous to their taking over the operation, Don's parents had been in the farm vacation business. The 1896 frame farmhouse was large enough to provide four units for visitors. While the home has very modern conveniences, there is a nice blend of warmth and charm in the room decor complete with high headboard beds, a claw-footed tub and hand-fashioned quilts and coverlets.

While the vacationers visit with the Rancks they can see a modern 94 acre dairy farm in operation. The family milks sixty-two registered Holsteins in a milking parlor and raise their replacements bringing the total of dairy animals on the farm to 125 head.

Visitors can see hay and corn as well as tobacco and barley being raised in the fields. They can play with the cats and kittens and fish in the farm pond. But more than likely they will surely remember Ginny's delicious home-grown breakfasts.

Each morning, Ginny serves breakfast promptly at 8:30 a.m. to those who wish to join the family for the morning meal. The Rancks have room to lodge a maximum of eighteen people, but Ginny says not all the rooms are full and if they are, not all the guests elect to sit down to breakfast.

"A lot of guests have had a smorgasbord or all-you-can-eat meal the night before and want to skip breakfast," Ginny explained.

Ginny's kitchen was newly refurbished two years ago and redecorated and equipped with everything from indirect lighting along the ceiling to a microwave oven. But she uses a very special old family recipe to delight her guests' appetites. She serves whole wheat crumb pies, omelettes-including a favorite made with longhorn cheese-, fresh milk, local produce and home-grown and locally cured bologna and dried beef.

The recipe Ginny uses for the whole wheat crumb pie comes from Grandma Lillian Habecker, Ginny said she has never seen a similar recipe anywhere and the combination of whole wheat and butter make this recipe very tasty.

Even before Ginny started serving her "crumb sugar pie," guests were making return visits to the Verdant View Farm. One family will be returning this Summer for their fifteenth year! "We have seen their children grow up," Ginny said. They call this 'their farm' and the daughters bring their boyfriends down from New York where they live to show them 'their farm!'"

The family sees most of its guests from Easter through summer into fall. Ginny checked her books and found there were a total of 95 individuals who stayed for various lengths of time in June this Summer. She served breakfast to sixty-four of the ninety-five. Ginny said that the months of July and August are much busier than June.

The visitors often find their way to Verdant View from a farm vacation booklet published by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Rural Affairs. The farm vacation directory lists farms all over the state which have been inspected and approved for taking in visitors. All who belong to the Pennsylvania Farm Vacation Association pay a membership fee and are in-



The Rancks and Mike and his mother work in the kitchen and take a few minutes to talk to each other. Mike's mother was visiting her son on the weekend. He is at the Rancks' for the summer.

spected annually. The farm vacations are billed by the recent directory as "a growing alternative to the hectic schedule of a touring vacation and much easier on gasoline."

While the farm vacation may offer the visitor a change of pace and different scenery as well as a chance to see a different way of life where the family works side by side day in and day out, the advantages work both ways, say Don and Ginny.

"Since we are, by the nature of the farm life, restricted from traveling or meeting others away from the farm, we come into contact with people from all professions as guests," Don explained.

Another nice aspect about having guests on the farm is that host and guest can enjoy each others' company and still get the work done. "They can watch and ask questions while we milk in the parlor and when we have to leave to get a cow they can watch something else until we get back to the parlor," Ginny said.

The Rancks visit with their guests most after breakfast. Some farm vacation hosts do not serve breakfast and find they visit with the guests in the evening. Don and Virginia have three small children—Eldon, 6, Heather, 4, and Aaron, 9 months. Ginny finds her schedule of serving breakfast suits her better than nighttime visiting. Don, on the other hand, often takes time to talk with the guests in the evening, especially if he knows they will be departing the next day.

Ginny has part-time help from a neighbor to assist her in the housekeeping chores. While the children are too young to help with the domestic tasks, they keep the visiting children entertained, Ginny added.

This Summer, the Rancks have a former guest for a fulltime employee. Mike Davon came with his parents to the farm three years ago for a brief vacation. His home is in Danbury, Connecticut. Last Summer he returned



Mike Davon, with his favorite cow, "Legs". Mike is a former farm vacationer turned farm employee.

for a two-month stay and learned a lot about the farm work. He decided, after the Rancks had offered him a job, to turn down a summer job in an electronic firm in Connecticut and come back to the farm to work.

Mike said, "A robot could do the job I would have been doing in the electronics firm. I would not have any real decisions to make. I would be checking and checking over and over again the same things and working inside all the time." Mike will be a senior this Fall when he returns to his high school. He looks to a future in computer science, bio-medical engineering or medicine, he says. His parents both have professions. His father is a mechanical engineer and his mother is a real estate broker.

For this summer, at least, Mike chose to not only visit, but also, to work on a Pennsylvania dairy farm. He enjoys tractor work when it is not too slow-going and welding. Part of his job is to milk or help milk both milkings each day. Getting up at 5 a.m. is part of his daily routine, as is helping to show the tourists around and doing whatever else needs to be done on a busy farm.

Whether it is a chance to make contact with people from many walks of life, the chance to visit while the work continues or even the unusual chance to discover a valuable employee, farm vacation hosting has been a good experience for Don and Virginia Ranck.

Ginny shares her Grandmother's special crumb sugar pie recipe:

Crumb Sugar Pie

Mix all together: (Ginny uses a pastry blender)

1 cup whole wheat flour
1½ cup white flour
1 cup granulated sugar
½ c. ip butter
2 teaspoons baking powder
¼ teaspoon baking soda
pinch of salt

Mix all together with a pastry blender. Take out ½ cup crumbs and set aside. Mix 1 cup sweet milk into remaining crumb mixture. Spoon into 9-inch unbaked pie crust. Sprinkle with reserved crumbs. Bake at 350°F for 30 minutes. Yields 2 9-inch pies. This is also called Breakfast Cake.



Don and Virginia and youngest child Aaron are shown on the kitchen steps of Verdant View Farm.

Homestead
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