About two years ago, my husband, children and I traveled two hours north from our Lancaster County home to Columbia County to pick blueberries. Memories came flooding back as I watched my husband and sons pick blueberries under the hot July sun. It reached over 100 degrees Fahrenheit that day, but we had a great time picking, listening to the bird alarm, and purposely picking under the sprinklers to cool us off. That day, I also met John and Crystal Eisenhauer of Split Rock Blueberry Farm, located on Mingle Inn Road in Berwick.

In 2002, the Eisenhauers bought Split Rock Blueberry Farm. Initially, John wanted to bulldoze the blueberry bushes in the front of his property to build a home. He didn’t have plans to become a blueberry farmer; however, Crystal talked him into keeping the bushes. They ultimately built their home in the back of the property, leaving the bushes intact and near the road where customers could easily find them.

Pickin’ Time

Picking in the early morning or early evening is often best because it is cooler suggests, Eisenhauer. Visitors are reminded to bring their own containers - such as plastic ice cream containers - for gathering blueberries. On a hot day, bottled water will be needed and visitors should generously apply bug spray and sunscreen. If any of these items are left behind, Split Rock has them available.

What about Picking Attire?

“It really doesn’t matter what people wear as long as it’s appropriate for being in public,” laughs Eisenhauer. “Some people like to wear long sleeves to protect themselves from the sun and bugs. A lot of people wear sunhats too. Also, it is good to wear comfortable sneakers or even boots if there is a lot of morning dew,” adds Eisenhauer.

Split Rock Blueberry Farm FAQ’s

Split Rock’s blueberries are not certified organic because of the costs involved to be certified organic in Pennsylvania; however, the Eisenhauers maintain that their blueberry crops are as close to organic as possible.

According to Eisenhauer, “The one chemical used (makes it) safe to eat the berries only eight hours after application. We never use it anywhere close to picking time. We have two children of our own (and) we allow our children to eat directly out of the fields (sic). We make it clear to customers that it is very safe to eat directly from a bush. We do it all of the time,” Eisenhauer reassures.

According to Eisenhauer, families enjoy their time together picking berries at Split Rock Blueberry Farm.

Eisenhauer, who is also an elementary school teacher, sees the benefits of picking blueberries together as a family.

“I feel blueberry picking is a worthwhile family activity because it allows a family to bond,” states Eisenhauer. “Families can come out to the country, enjoy the scenery, and talk to each other without the distractions of daily life. Farm Fresh and You Pick Farms have the best tasting fruit because they are picked to your liking and they have the highest amount of sugar at the appropriate time. “

Also, on a practical level, blueberry picking can serve as a lesson on colors for younger

Other Northeastern PA Blueberry Farms to Explore

There are many blueberry farms in Northeastern Pennsylvania. It is advisable to call prior to planning your visit.

Hilltop Berry Farm and Nursery
2328 Osborne Road, PO Box 318, New Milford
465-3515
Email: Hilltopberry@yahoo.com

Dymonds Farm and Farm Markets
352 Brace Road, Dallas
675-1696

Spring Mountain Farms
4595 Interchange Rd, Lehighton
610-871-2310
Email: bill@springmountainfarms.com

Pleasant Food Farm
2240 Creek Dr, Waymart
448-2658
Email: marklichtenstein@yahoo.com

Goat House Farms
4 Swamp Rd, Pleasant Mount
798-2479
goathousefarms.com
Facebook page: facebook.com/goathousefarm
Email: goathousefarms@gmail.com

Paupack Blueberry Farm
184 Gumbletown Rd, Paupack
226-9702
paupackblueberryfarm.com

A&B City Slickers Blueberry Farm
265 Doney Dr, Palmerton
610-681-4500
E-mail: bill@pablueberry.com

Pine Cone Homestead
HC 62 Box 12, Long Pond
851-1582
Email: pineconehomestead@gmail.com; put the following in the subject line: “Blueberry Picking Appointment Inquiry.”
Open by appointment only.

Sickler’s Blueberry Patch
PA-2002/School House Road, Vernon
333-5286

Stemmrich Blueberry Farm
71 East Cherry Rd, Nescopeck
379-2908
Email: charlesstemrich@gmail.com

For more information on Your Pick Farms, visit pickyourown.org.

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Children while also teaching them a simple science lesson. “You don’t want to pick the green, pink or purple blueberries because they’re not ripe.”

**Critter Alert**

Families should be aware that there is a bird alarm machine that frightens birds away from the blueberry bushes. When the fields are quiet, the alarm can sound especially loud; however, once pickers become busy plucking berries, it simply becomes background noise.

“...the alarm plays various distress and predator calls from dawn to dusk. It is an essential part of our farm; it does an amazing job, but having pickers is the best way to keep the birds away,” explains Eisenhauer.

Many children might be afraid that they’ll get stung by bees when they see them buzzing around the blueberry bushes. But the bees that pollinate the blueberries at Split Rock are bumblebees and honeybees; therefore, they’re too busy sucking up pollen from blueberry flowers to pay much attention to the pickers.

So, this July when you are ready for a little road trip, gather up the kids, don the sunscreen, and plan an outing at a local blueberry farm.

**Happy Picking!**

Blueberries at Split Rock are typically priced at $1.40 per pound, and the farm is tentatively opened for picking from July 4th through August 4th.

**Split Rock Blueberry Farm**

472 Mingle Inn Road, Berwick
gotberries.com
752-0800

Mmmmm.....
A perfect summertime, refreshing cool-down:

**Blueberry Pink Lemonade**

**Ingredients**
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1-1/4 cups fresh blueberries, divided
- 1/3 cup lemon juice

**Instructions**
1. In 1 quart glass measuring cup, combine sugar, 2 tablespoons blueberries and 1/2 cup water
2. Microwave on high until hot, about 1 minute
3. Stir until sugar dissolves
4. Add lemon juice and enough water to make 1 quart
5. Chill
6. Fill tall glasses with ice cubes, add chilled blueberry mixture and remaining berries, dividing equally
7. Garnish with lemon slices if desired

Yield: 1 quart (4 one-cup servings)

Number of servings: 4

**To make Blueberry ice cubes**
1. Place 3 berries in each of 12 ice cube cups
2. Fill with water and freeze
3. 36 berries equals about 1/4 cup

**Flag Cupcakes**

**Ingredients**
- 1 package (18- to 19-ounces) yellow cake mix
- 1/3 cup applesauce
- 3 egg whites
- 3 cups fresh blueberries, divided
- 1 package (8 ounces) reduced-fat cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 cup confectioners’ sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 roll red-colored rolled fruit snack (from a 4.5-ounce box)

**Instructions**
1. Preheat oven to 350°F
2. In a large mixing bowl, beat cake mix with applesauce, egg whites and 1-3/4 cups water for 30 seconds on low speed, then 2 minutes on medium speed
3. Spoon batter into 24 (2½-inch) aluminum or paper lined muffin cups
4. Evenly divide 1 cup of blueberries onto tops of batter. Do not stir
5. Bake cupcakes following package directions
6. Remove to a wire rack and cool completely
7. In a small bowl, beat cream cheese, confectioners’ sugar and vanilla until smooth
8. Spoon onto cooled cupcakes. Spread to the edges
9. Unroll fruit snack and, with a sharp knife, cut into strips 1/8-inch wide by 2-inch long
10. On half of each cupcake, arrange strips, trimming each to fit. Arrange remaining 2 cups blueberries on the frosting on other halves of the cupcakes, about 10 blueberries per cupcake

Source: U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council